



*Breathing the breath of desire—  
Exploding with elemental passion—*

## THE LOVE-MAKERS

Their very intimacies stripped  
of the look of secrecy by fifteen  
of the most brilliant writers of  
all time, and revealed to you in  
*all their naked truth—*



The |

# Love-Makers

Edited by Mark Merrill

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## LONG BLACK SONG

*by Richard Wright*

*Lust knows no barriers—neither does hatred. Here in Richard Wright's powerful story a Negro woman and a white man are caught up in the first of these emotions and doomed irrevocably to an explosive manifestation of the second.*

### I

*Go t sleep, baby  
Papas gone t town  
Go t sleep, baby  
The suns goin down  
Go t sleep, baby  
Yo candys in the sack  
Go t sleep, baby  
Papas comin back . . .*

Over and over she crooned, and at each lull of her voice : rocked the wooden cradle with a bare black foot. But the baby squalled louder, its wail drowning out the song. She stopped and stood over the cradle, wondering what was bothering it, if its stomach hurt. She felt the diaper; it was dry. She lifted it up and patted its back. Still it cried, longer and louder. She put it back into the cradle, dangled a string of red beads before its eyes.

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little fingers clawed them away. She bent over, frowning, panting. "Whut's the mattah, chile? Yuh wan some moh?" she held a dripping gourd to the black lips, but the baby turned its head and kicked its legs. She stood a moment, perplexed. Whuts wrong wid that chile? She ain never carried on like this this tima day. She picked it up and went to the open door. "See the sun, baby?" she asked, pointing to a big ball of red drying between the branches of trees. The baby pulled back and strained its round black arms and legs against her stomach and shoulders. She knew it was tired; she could tell by the halting way it opened its mouth to draw in air. She sat on a wooden stool, unbuttoned the front of her dress, brought the baby closer and offered it a black teat. "Don baby wan suppah?" It pulled away and went limp, crying softly, piteously, as though it would never stop. Then it pushed its fingers against her breasts and wailed. Lawd, chile, whut yuh wan? Yo ma cant hep yuh less she knows whut yuh wan. Tears gushed; four white teeth flashed in red gums; the little chest heaved up and down and round black fingers stretched floorward. Lawd, chile, whuts wrong wid yuh? She stooped slowly, allowing her body to be guided by the downward tug. As soon as the little fingers touched the floor the wail quieted into a broken sniffle. She turned the baby loose and watched it crawl toward a corner. She followed and saw the little fingers reach for the tail-end of an old eight-day clock. "Yuh wan tha ol clock?" She dragged the clock into the center of the floor. The baby crawled after it, calling, "Ahh!" Then it raised its hands and beat on the top of the clock Bink! Bink! Bink! "Naw yuhll hurt yo hands!" She held the baby and looked around. It cried and struggled. "Wait, baby!" she fetched a small stick from the top of a rickety dresser. "Here," she said closing the little fingers about it. "Beat wid this, see?" She heard each blow landing squarely on top of the clock. Bang! Bang! Bang! And with each bang the baby smiled and said, "Ahh!" Mabbe thall keep yuh quiet erwhile. Mabbe Ah kin get some res now. She stood in the doorway. Lawd, tha chiles a pain! She mus be teethin. E something . . .

She wiped sweat from her forehead with the bottom

her dress and looked out over the green fields rolling up the hillsides. She sighed, fighting a feeling of loneliness. Lawd, its sho hard t pass the days wid Silas gone. Been mos a week now since he took the wagon outta here. Hope ain nothin wrong. He must be buyin a heapa stuff there in Colwata t be stayin all this time. Yes; maybe Silas would remember and bring that five-yard piece of red calico she wanted. Oh, Lawd! Ah *hope* he don fergit it!

She saw green fields wrapped in the thickening gloam. It was as if they had left the earth, those fields, and were floating slowly skyward. The afterglow lingered, red, dying, somehow tenderly sad. And far away, in front of her, earth and sky met in a soft swoon of shadow. A cricket chirped, sharp and lonely; and it seemed she could hear it chirping long after it had stopped. Silas ought c mon soon. Ahm tireda staying here by mahself.

Loneliness ached in her. She swallowed, hearing Bang! Bang! Bang! Tom been gone t war mos a year now. N tha ol wars over n we ain heard nothin yit. Lawd, don let Tom be dead! She frowned into the gloam and wondered about that awful war so far away. They said it was over now. Yeah, Gawd had t stop em fo they killed everybody. She felt that merely to go so far away from home was a kind of death in itself. Just to go that far away was to be killed. Nothing good could come from men going miles across the sea to fight. N how come they wanna kill each other? How come they wanna make blood? Killing was not what men ought to do. Shucks! she thought.

She sighed, thinking of Tom, hearing Bang! Bang! Bang! She saw Tom, saw his big black smiling face; her eyes went dreamily blank, drinking in the red afterglow. Yes, God; it could have been Tom instead of Silas who was having her now. Yes; it could have been Tom she was loving. She smiled and asked herself, Lawd, Ah wondah how would it been wid Tom? Against the plush sky she saw a white bright day and a green cornfield and she saw Tom walking in his overalls and she was with Tom and he had his arm about her waist. She remembered how weak she had felt feeling his fingers sinking into the flesh of her hips. Her knees had trembled and she had had a hard time trying to stand up and not just sink right there to the ground. Yes;

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that was what Tom had wanted her to do. But she had held Tom up and he had held her up; they had held each other up to keep from slipping to the ground there in the green cornfield. Lawd! Her breath went and she passed her tongue over her lips. But that was not as exciting as that winter evening when the grey skies were sleeping and she and Tom were coming home from church down dark Lover's Lane. She felt the tips of her teats tingling and touching the front of her dress as she remembered how he had crushed her against him and hurt her. She had closed her eyes and was smelling the acrid scent of dry October eaves and had gone weak in his arms and had felt she could not breathe any more and had torn away and run, un home. And the sweet ache which had frightened her when she was stealing back to her loins now with the silence and the cricket calls and the red afterglow and Bang! Bang! Bang! Lawd, Ah wondah how would it been wid Tom?

She stepped out on the porch and leaned against the wall of the house. Sky sang a red song. Fields whispered a green prayer. And song and prayer were dying in silence and shadow. Never in all her life had she been so much alone as she was now. Days were never so long as these days; and nights were never so empty as these nights. She jerked her head impatiently, hearing Bang! Bang! Bang! Shucks! she thought. When Silas had gone something had ebbed so slowly that at first she had not noticed it. Now she felt all of it as though the feeling had no bottom. She tried to think just how it had happened. Yes; there had been all her life the long hope of white bright days and the deep desire of dark black nights and then Silas had gone. Bang Bang! Bang! There had been laughter and eating and singing and the long gladness of green cornfields in summer. There had been cooking and sewing and sweeping and the deep dream of sleeping grey skies in winter. Always it had been like that and she had been happy. But no more. The happiness of those days and nights, of those green cornfields and grey skies had started to go from her when Tom had gone to war. His leaving had left an empty black hole in her heart, a black hole that Silas had come in and filled. But not quite. Silas had not quite filled that hole. No; days and nights were not as they were before.

She lifted her chin, listening. She had heard something, a dull throb like she had heard that day Silas had called her outdoors to look at the airplane. Her eyes swept the sky. But there was no plane. Mabbe its behin the house? She stepped into the yard and looked upward through paling light. There were only a few big wet stars trembling in the east. Then she heard the throb again. She turned, looking up and down the road. The throb grew louder, droning; and she heard Bang! Bang! Bang! There! A car! Wondah whuts a car doin coming out here? A black car was winding over a dusty road, coming toward her. Mabee some white mans bringing Silas home wida loada goods? But, Lawd, Ah *hope* its no trouble The car stopped in front of the house and a white man got out. Wondah whut he wans? She looked at the car, but could not see Silas. The white man was young; he wore a straw hat and had no coat. He walked toward her with a hugh black package under his arm.

"Well, howre yuh today, Aunty?"

"Ahm well. How yuh?"

"Oh, so-so. Its sure hot today, hunh?"

She brushed her hand across her forehead and sighed.

"Yeah; it is kinda warm."

"You busy?"

"Naw, Ah ain doin nothin."

"Ive got something to show you. Can I sit here, on your porch?"

"Ah reckon so. But, Mistah, Ah ain got no money."

"Haven't you sold your cotton yet?"

"Silas gone t town wid it now."

"Whens he coming back?"

"Ah don know. Ahm waitin fer im."

She saw the white man take out a handkerchief and mop his face. Bang! Bang! Bang! He turned his head and looked through the open doorway, into the front room.

"Whats all that going on in there?"

She laughed.

"Aw, ihas jus Ruth."

"Whats she doing?"

"She beatin tha ol clock."

"Beating a *clock*?"

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she laughed again.

"She wouldn't go t sleep so Ah give her tha ol clock  
play wid."

The white man got up and went to the front door; he  
stood a moment looking at the black baby hammering on  
the clock. Bang! Bang! Bang!

"But why let her tear your clock up?"

"It ain no good."

"You could have it fixed."

"We ain got no money t be fixin no clocks."

"Havent you got a clock?"

"Naw."

"But how do you keep time?"

"We get erlong widout time."

"But how do you know when to get up in the morning?"

"We jus git up, thas all."

"But how do you know what time it is when you get up?"

"We git erlong widout time."

"And at night, how do you tell when its night?"

"It gits dark when the sun goes down."

"Haven't you ever had a clock?"

She laughed and turned her face toward the silent fields.

"Mistah, we don need no clock."

"Well, this beats everything! I dont see how in the world  
anybody can live without time."

"We jus don need no time, Mistah."

The white man laughed and shook his head; she laughed  
and looked at him. The white man was funny. Jus like lil  
boy. Astin how do Ah know when t get up in the mawnin!  
She laughed again and mused on the baby, hearing Bang!  
Bang! Bang! She could hear the white man breathing at her  
side; she felt his eyes on her face. She looked at him; she  
saw he was looking at her breasts. Hes jus lika lil boy.  
Acks like he cant understand *nothin!*

"But you need a clock," the white man insisted. "That's  
what Im out here for. Im selling clocks and graphophones.  
The clocks are made right into the graphophones, a nice  
sort of combination, hunh? You can have music and time  
all at once. I'll show you . . ."

"Mistah, we don need no clock!"

"You dont have to buy it. It wont cost you anything just to look."

He unpacked the big black box. She saw the strands of his auburn hair glinting in the afterglow. His back bulged against his white shirt as he stooped. He pulled out a square brown graphophone. She bent forward, looking. Lawd, but its pretty! She saw the face of a clock under the horn of the graphophone. The gilt on the corners sparkled. The color in the wood glowed softly. It reminded her of the light she saw sometimes in the baby's eyes. Slowly she slid a finger over a beveled edge; she wanted to take the box into her arms and kiss it.

"Its eight o'clock," he said.

"Yeah?"

"It only costs fifty dollars. And you dont have to pay for it all at once. Just five dollars down and five dollars a month."

She smiled. The white man was just like a little boy. Jus like a chile. She saw him grinding the handle of the box.

There was a sharp, scratching noise; then she moved nervously, her body caught in the ringing coils of music.

*When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound . . .*

She rose on circling waves of white bright days and dark black nights.

*. . . and time shall be no more . . .*

Higher and higher she mounted.

*And the morning breaks . . .*

Earth fell far behind, forgotten.

*. . . eternal, bright and fair . . .*

Echo after echo sounded.

*When the saved of the earth shall g.*

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Her blood surged like the long gladness of summer.

*... over the other shore ...*

Her blood ebbed like the deep dream of sleep in winter.

*And when the roll is called up yonder ...*

She gave up, holding her breath.

*I'll be there ...*

A lump filled her throat. She leaned her back against a post, trembling, feeling the rise and fall of days and nights, of summer and winter; surging, ebbing, leaping about her, beyond her, far out over the fields to where earth and sky lay folded in darkness. She wanted to lie down and sleep, or else leap up and shout. When the music stopped she felt herself coming back, being let down slowly. She sighed. It was dark now. She looked into the doorway. The baby was sleeping on the floor. Ah gotta git up n put that chile t bed, she thought.

"Wasnt that pretty?"

"It wuz pretty, awright."

"When do you think your husbands coming back?"

"Ah don know, Mistah."

She went into the room and put the baby into the cradle. She stood again in the doorway and looked at the shadowy box that had lifted her up and carried her away. Crickets called. The dark sky had swallowed up the earth, and more stars were hanging, clustered, burning. She heard the white man sigh. His face was lost in shadows. She saw him rub his palms over his forehead. Hes jus lika lil boy.

"Id like to see your husband tonight," he said. "Ive got to be in Lilydale at six o'clock in the morning and I wont be back through here soon. I got to pick up my buddy over there and we're heading North."

She smiled into the darkness. He was just like a little boy. A little boy selling clocks.

"Yuh sell them things alla time?" she asked.

"Just for the summer," he said. "I go to school in winter."

If I can make enough money out of this Ill go to Chicago to school this fall . . ."

"Whut yuh gonna be?"

"Be? What do you mean?"

"Whut yuh goin t school fer?"

"Im studying science."

"Whuts tha?"

"Oh, er . . ." He looked at her. "Its about why things are as they are."

"Why things is as they is?"

"Well, its something like that."

"How come yuh wanna study tha?"

"Oh, you wouldnt understand."

She sighed.

"Naw, Ah guess Ah wouldnt."

"Well, I reckon Ill be getting along," said the white man.  
"Can I have a drink of water?"

"Sho. But we ain got nothin but well-watah, n yuhll have t come n git."

"Thats all right."

She slid off the porch and walked over the ground with bare feet. She heard the shoes of the white man behind her, falling to the earth in soft whispers. It was dark now. She led him to the well, groped her way, caught the bucket and let it down with a rope; she heard a splash and the bucket grew heavy. She drew it up, pulling against its weight, throwing one hand over the other, feeling the cool wet of the rope on her palms.

"Ah don git watah outa here much," she said, a little out of breath. "Silas gits the watah mos of the time. This buckets too heavy fer me."

"Oh, wait! Ill help!"

His shoulder touched hers. In the darkness she felt his warm hands fumbling for the rope.

"Where is it?"

"Here."

She extended the rope through the darkness. His fingers touched her breasts.

"Oh!"

She said it in spite of herself. He would think she was

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"... about that. And he was a white man. She was... she had said that.

"Wheres the gourd?" he asked. "Gee, its dark!"  
She stepped back and tried to see him.

"Here."

"I cant see!" he said, laughing.

Again she felt his fingers on the tips of her breasts. She backed away, saying nothing this time. She thrust the gourd out from her. Warm fingers met her cold hands. He had the gourd. She heard him drink; it was the faint, soft music of water going down a dry throat, the music of water in a silent night. He sighed and drank again.

"I was thirsty," he said. "I hadn't had any water since noon."

She knew he was standing in front of her; she could not see him, but she felt him. She heard the gourd rest against the wall of the well. She turned, then felt his hands full on her breasts. She struggled back.

"Naw, Mistah!"

"Im not going to hurt you!"

White arms were about her, tightly. She was still. But hes a *white* man. A *white* man. She felt his breath coming hot on her neck and where his hands held her breasts the flesh seemed to knot. She was rigid, poised; she swayed backward, then forward. She caught his shoulders and pushed.

"Naw, naw . . . Mistah, Ah cant do that!"

She jerked away. He caught her hand.

"Please . . ."

"Lemme go!"

She tried to pull her hand out of his and felt his fingers tighten. She pulled harder, and for a moment they were balanced, one against the other. Then he was at her side again, his arms about her.

"I wont hurt you! I wont hurt you . . ."

She leaned backward and tried to dodge his face. Her breasts were full against him; she gasped, feeling the full length of his body. She held her head far to one side; she knew he was seeking her mouth. His hands were on her breasts again. A wave of warm blood swept into her stomach and loins. She felt his lips touching her throat and where he kissed it burned.

"Naw, naw . . ."

Her eyes were full of the wet stars and they blurred, silver and blue. Her knees were loose and she heard her own breathing; she was trying to keep from falling. But he's a *white* man! A *white* man! Naw! Naw! And still she would not let him have her lips; she kept her face away. Her breasts hurt where they were crushed against him and each time she caught her breath she held it and while she held it it seemed that if she would let it go it would kill her. Her knees were pressed hard against his and she clutched the upper parts of his arms, trying to hold on. Her loins ached. She felt her body sliding.

"Gawd . . ."

the long gladness of summer and the ebb of the deep dream of sleep in winter till a high red wave of hotness drowned her in a deluge of silver and blue and boiled her blood and blistered her flesh *bangbangbang* . . .

## II

"Yuh bettah go," she said.

She felt him standing by the side of the bed, in the dark. She heard him clear his throat. His belt-buckle tinkled.

"Im leaving that clock and graphophone," he said.

She said nothing. In her mind she saw the box glowing softly, like the light in the baby's eyes. She stretched out her legs and relaxed.

"You can have it for forty instead of fifty. Ill be by early in the morning to see if your husbands in."

She said nothing. She felt the hot skin of her body growing steadily cooler.

"Do you think hell pay ten on it? Hell only owe thirty then."

She pushed her toes deep into the quilt, feeling a night wind blowing through the door. Her palms rested lightly on top of her breasts.

"Do you think hell pay ten on it?"

"Hunh?"

"Hell pay ten, wont he?"

"Ah don know," she whispered.

She heard his shoe hit against a wall; footsteps echoed on the wooden porch. She started nervously when she heard the roar of his car; she followed the throb of the motor till she heard it when she could hear it no more, followed it till she heard it roaring faintly in her ears in the dark and silent room. Her hands moved on her breasts and she was conscious of herself, all over; she felt the weight of her body resting heavily on shucks. She felt the presence of fields lying out there covered with night. She turned over slowly and lay on her stomach, her hands tucked under her. From somewhere came a creaking noise. She sat upright, feeling fear. The wind sighed. Crickets called. She lay down again, hearing shucks rustle. Her eyes looked straight up in the darkness and her blood sogged. She had lain a long time,

full of a vast peace, when a far away tinkle made her feel the bed again. The tinkle came through the night; she listened, knowing that soon she would hear the rattle of Silas' wagon. Even then she tried to fight off the sound of Silas' coming, even then she wanted to feel the peace of night filling her again; but the tinkle grew louder and she heard the jangle of a wagon and the quick trot of horses. Thas Silas! She gave up and waited. She heard horses neighing. Out of the window bare feet whispered in the dust, then crossed the porch, echoing in soft booms. She closed her eyes and saw Silas come into the room in his dirty overalls as she had seen him come in a thousand times before.

"Yuh sleep, Sarah?"

She did not answer. Feet walked across the floor and a match scratched. She opened her eyes and saw Silas standing over her with a lighted lamp. His hat was pushed far back on his head and he was laughing.

"Ah reckon yuh thought Ah waznt never comin back, hunh? Cant yuh wake up? See, Ah got that red cloth yuh wanted . . ." He laughed again and threw the red cloth on the mantel.

"Yuh hongry?" she asked.

"Naw, Ah kin make out till mawnin." Shucks rustled as he sat on the edge of the bed. "Ah got two hundred n fifty fer mah cotton."

"Two hundred n fifty?"

"Nothin different! N guess whut Ah done?"

"Whut?"

"Ah bought ten mo acres o land. Got em from ol man Burgess. Paid im a hundred n fifty dollahs down. Ahll pay the rest next year ef things go erlong awright. Ahma have t git a man t hep me next spring . . ."

"Yuh mean hire somebody?"

"Sho, hire somebody! Whut yuh think? Ain tha the way the white folks do? Ef yuhs gonna git anywhere yuhs gotta do just like they do." He paused. "Whut yuh been doin since Ah been gone?"

"Nothin. Cookin, cleanin, n . . ."

"How Ruth?"

"She awright." She lifted her head. "Silas, yuh git *se* lettahs?"

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"Naw. But Ah heard Tom wuz in town."

"In town?"

She sat straight up.

"Yeah, thas whut the folks wuz sayin at the sto."

"Back from the war?"

"Ah ast erroun t see ef Ah could fin im. But Ah couldnt."

"Lawd, Ah wish hed c mon home."

"Them white folks shos glad the wars over. But thing wuz kinda bad there in town. Everywhere Ah looked wuzr nothin but black n white soljers. N them white folks beat u a black soljer yestiddy. He was jus in from France. Wu still wearin his soljers suit. They claimed he sassed a whit woman . . ."

"Who wuz he?"

"Ah don know. Never saw im befo."

"Yuh see An Peel?"

"Naw."

"Silas!" she said reprovingly.

"Aw, Sarah, Ah jus couldnt git out there."

"Whut else yuh bring sides the cloth?"

"Ah got yuh some high-top shoes." He turned and looked at her in the dim light of the lamp. "Woman, ain yuh glad Ah bought yuh some shoes n cloth?" He laughed and lifted his feet to the bed. "Lawd, Sarah, yuhs sho sleepy, ain you?"

"Bettah put tha lamp out, Silas . . ."

"Aw . . ." He swung out of the bed and stood still for a moment. She watched him, then turned her face to the wall.

"Whuts that by the windah?" he asked.

She saw him bending over and touching the graphophone with his fingers.

"Thasa graphophone."

"Where yuh git it from?"

"A man lef it here."

"When he bring it?"

"Today."

"But how come he t leave it?"

"He says hell be out here in the mawnin t see ef yuh wans t buy it."

He was on his knees, feeling the wood and looking at the gilt on the edges of the box. He stood up and looked at her.

"Yuh ain never said yuh wanted one of these things."

She said nothing.

"Where wuz the man from?"

"Ah don know."

"He white?"

"Yeah."

He put the lamp back on the mantel. As he lifted the globe to blow out the flame, his hand paused.

"Whos hats this?"

She raised herself and looked. A straw hat lay bottom upwards on the edge of the mantel. Silas picked it up and looked back to the bed, to Sarah.

"Ah guess its the white mans. He must a lef it . . ."

"Whut he doin *in our room?*"

"He wuz talkin t me bout that graphophone."

She watched him go to the window and stoop again to the box. He picked it up, fumbled with the price-tag and took the box to the light.

"Whut this thing cos?"

"Forty dollahs."

"But its marked fifty here."

"Oh, Ah means he said fifty . . ."

He took a step toward the bed.

"Yuh lyin t me!"

"Silas!"

He heaved the box out of the front door; there was a smashing, tinkling noise as it bounded off the front porch and hit the ground. "Whut in hell yuh lie t me fer?"

"Yuh broke the box!"

"Ahma break yo Gawddam neck ef yuh don stop lyin t me!"

"Silas, Ah ain lied t yuh!"

"Shut up, Gawddammit! Yuh did!"

He was standing by the bed with the lamp trembling in his hand. She stood on the other side, between the bed and the wall.

"How come yuh tell me tha thing cos *forty* dollahs when it cos *fifty*?"

"Thas whut he tol me."

"How come he take *ten* dollahs off fer yuh?"

"He ain took nothin off fer me, Silas!"

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"Yuh lyin t me! N yuh lied t me bout Tom, too!"

She stood with her back to the wall, her lips parted, looking at him silently, steadily. Their eyes held for a moment. Silas looked down, as though he were about to believe her. Then he stiffened.

"Whos this?" he asked, picking up a short yellow pencil from the crumpled quilt.

She said nothing. He started toward her.

"Yuh wan me t take mah raw-hide whip n make yuh talk?"

"Naw, naw, Silas! Yuh wrong! He wuz figgerin wid tha pencil!"

He was silent a moment, his eyes searching her face.

"Gawddam yo black soul t hell, don yuh try lyin t mel Ef yuh start layin wid white men Ahll hosswhip yuh t a incha yo life. Shos theres a Gawd in Heaven Ah will! From sunup t sundown Ah works mah guts out t pay them white trash bastards whut Ah owes em, n then Ah comes n fins they been in mah house! Ah cant go into their houses, n yuh know Gawddam well Ah cant! They don have no mercy on no black folks; wes jus like dirt under their feet! Fer ten years Ah slaves lika dog t git mah farm free, givin ever penny Ah kin t em, n then Ah comes n fins they been in mah house . . ." He was speechless with outrage. "Ef yuh wans t eat at mah table yuhs gonna keep them white trash bastards out, yuh hear? Tha white ape kin come n git tha damn box n Ah ain gonna pay im a cent! He had no bisness leavin it here, n yuh had no bisness lettin im! Ahma tell tha sonofabitch something when he comes out here in the mawnin, so hep me Gawd! Now git back in tha bed!"

She slipped beneath the quilt and lay still, her face turned to the wall. Her heart thumped slowly and heavily. She heard him walk across the floor in his bare feet. She heard the bottom of the lamp as it rested on the mantel. She stiffened when the room darkened. Feet whispered across the floor again. The shucks rustled from Silas' weight as he sat on the edge of the bed. She was still, breathing softly. Silas was mumbling. She felt sorry for him. In the darkness it seemed that she could see the hurt look on his black face. The crow of a rooster came from far away, came so faintly that it seemed she had not heard it. The bed sank and the

shucks cried out in dry whispers; she knew Silas had stretched out. She heard him sigh. Then she jumped because he jumped. She could feel the tenseness of his body; she knew he was sitting bolt upright. She felt his hands fumbling jerkily under the quilt. Then the bed heaved amid a wild shout of shucks and Silas' feet hit the floor with a loud boom. She snatched herself to her elbows, straining her eyes in the dark, wondering what was wrong now. Silas was moving about, cursing under his breath.

"Don wake Ruth up!" she whispered.

"Ef yuh say one mo word t me Ahma slap yuh inter a black spasm!"

She grabbed her dress, got up and stood by the bed, the tips of her fingers touching the wall behind her. A match flared in yellow flame; Silas' face was caught in a circle of light. He was looking downward, staring intently at a white wad of cloth balled in his hand. His black cheeks were hard, set; his lips were tightly pursed. She looked closer; she saw that the white cloth was a man's handkerchief. Silas' fingers loosened; she heard the handkerchief hit the floor softly, damply. The match went out.

"Yuh little bitch!"

Her knees gave. Fear oozed from her throat to her stomach. She moved in the dark toward the door, struggling with the dress, jamming it over her head. She heard the thick skin of Silas' feet swish across the wooden planks.

"Ah got mah raw-hide whip n Ahm takin yuh t the barn!"

She ran on tiptoe to the porch and paused, thinking of the baby. She shrank as something whined through air. A red streak of pain cut across the small of her back and burned its way into her body, deeply.

"Silas!" she screamed.

She grabbed for the post and fell in dust. She screamed again and crawled out of reach.

"Git t the barn, Gawddammit!"

She scrambled up and ran through the dark, hearing the baby cry. Behind her leather thongs hummed and feet whispered swiftly over the dusty ground.

"Cmere, yuh bitch! Cmere, Ah say!"

## THE LOVE-MAKERS

"Yuh lyin t me! N yuh lied t me bout Tom, too!"

She stood with her back to the wall, her lips parted, looking at him silently, steadily. Their eyes held for a moment. Silas looked down, as though he were about to believe her. Then he stiffened.

"Whos this?" he asked, picking up a short yellow pencil from the crumpled quilt.

She said nothing. He started toward her.

"Yuh wan me t take mah raw-hide whip n make yuh talk?"

"Naw, naw, Silas! Yuh wrong! He wuz figgerin wid tha pencil!"

He was silent a moment, his eyes searching her face.

"Gawddam yo black soul t hell, don yuh try lyin t me! Ef yuh start layin wid white men Ahll hosswhip yuh t a inch a yo life. Shos theres a Gawd in Heaven Ah will! From sunup t sundown Ah works mah guts out t pay them white trash bastards whut Ah owes em, n then Ah comes n fins they been in mah house! Ah cant go into their houses, n yuh know Gawddam well Ah cant! They don have no mercy on no black folks; wes jus like dirt under their feet! Fer ten years Ah slaves lika dog t git mah farm free, givin ever penny Ah kin t em, n then Ah comes n fins they been in mah house . . ." He was speechless with outrage. "Ef yuh wans t eat at mah table yuhs gonna keep them white trash bastards out, yuh hear? Tha white ape kin come n git tha damn box n Ah ain gonna pay im a cent! He had no bisness leavin it here, n yuh had no bisness lettin im! Ahma tell tha sonofabitch something when he comes out here in the mawnin, so hep me Gawd! Now git back in tha bed!"

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## THE LOVE-MAKERS

She ran to the road and stopped. She wanted to go back and get the baby, but she dared not. Not as long as Silas had that whip. She stiffened, feeling that he was near.

"Yuh jus as well c mon back n git yo beatin!"

She ran again, slowing now and then to listen. If she only knew where he was she would slip back into the house and get the baby and walk all the way to Aunt Peel's.

"Yuh ain comin back in mah house till Ah beat yuh!"

She was sorry for the anger she knew he had out there in the field. She had a bewildering impulse to go to him and ask him not to be angry; she wanted to tell him that there was nothing to be angry about; that what she had done did not matter; that she was sorry; that after all she was his wife and still loved him. But there was no way she could do that now; if she went to him he would whip her as she had seen him whip a horse.

"Sarah! Sarah!"

His voice came from far away. Ahm goin git Ruth. Back through dust she sped, going on her toes, holding her breath.

"Saaaarah!"

From far off his voice floated over the fields. She ran into the house and caught the baby in her arms. Again she sped through dust on her toes. She did not stop till she was so far away that his voice sounded like a faint echo falling from the sky. She looked up; the stars were paling a little. Mus be gittin near mawnin. She walked now, letting her feet sink softly into the cool dust. The baby was sleeping; she could feel the little chest swelling against her arm. She looked up again; the sky was solid black. Its gittin near mawnin. Ahma take Ruth t An Peels. N mabbe ahll fin Tom . . . But she could not walk all that distance in the dark. Not now. Her legs were tired. For a moment a memory of surge and ebb rose in her blood; she felt her legs straining, upward. She sighed. Yes, she would go to the sloping hillside back of the garden and wait until morning. Then she would slip away. She stopped, listened. She heard a faint, rattling noise. She imagined Silas' kicking or throwing the smashed graphophone. Hes mad! Hes sho mad! Aw, Lawd! . . . She stopped stock still, squeezing the baby till it whimpered. What would happen when that white man came out in the morning? She

had forgotten him. She would have to head him off and tell him. Yeah, cause Silas jus mad ernuff t kill! Lawd, hes mad ernuff t kill!

## III

She circled the house widely, climbing a slope, groping her way, holding the baby high in her arms. After awhile she stopped and wondered where on the slope she was. She remembered there was an elm tree near the edge; if she could find it she would know. She groped farther, feeling with her feet. Ahm gittin los! And she did not want to fall with the baby. Ahma stop here, she thought. When morning came she would see the car of the white man from this hill and she would run down the road and tell him to go back; and then there would be no killing. Dimly she saw in her mind a picture of men killing and being killed. White men killed the black and black men killed the white. White men killed the black men because they could, and the black men killed the white men to keep from being killed. And killing was blood. Lawd, Ah wish Tom wuz here. She shuddered, sat on the ground and watched the sky for signs of morning. Mabbe Ah oughta walk on down the road? Naw . . . Her legs were tired. Again she felt her body straining. Then she saw Silas holding the white man's handkerchief. She heard it hit the floor, softly, damply. She was sorry for what she had done. Silas was as good to her as any black man could be to a black woman. Most of the black women worked in the fields as croppers. But Silas had given her her own home, and that was more than many others had done for their women. Yes, she knew how Silas felt. Always he had said he was as good as any white man. He had worked hard and saved his money and bought a farm so he could grow his own crops like white men. Silas hates white folks! Lawd, he sho hates em!

The baby whimpered. She unbuttoned her dress and nursed her in the dark. She looked toward the east. There! A tinge of grey hovered. It wont be long now. She could see ghostly outlines of trees. Soon she would see the elm, and by the elm she would sit till it was light enough to see the road.

## THE LOVE-MAKERS

The baby slept. Far off a rooster crowed. Sky deepened. She rose and walked slowly down a narrow, curving path and came to the elm tree. Standing on the edge of a slope, she saw a dark smudge in a sea of shifting shadows. That was her home. Wondah how come Silas didnt light the lamp? She shifted the baby from her right hip to her left, sighed, struggled against sleep. She sat on the ground again, caught the baby close and leaned against the trunk of a tree. Her eye-lids drooped and it seemed that a hard cold hand caught hold of her right leg or was it her left leg? she did not know which—and began to drag her over a rough litter of shucks and when she strained to see who it was that was pulling her no one was in sight but far ahead was darkness and it seemed that out of the darkness some force came and pulled her like a magnet and she went sliding along over a rough bed of screeching shucks and it seemed that a wild fear made her want to scream but when she opened her mouth to scream she could not scream and she felt she was coming to a wide black hole and again she made ready to scream and then it was too late for she was already over the wide black hole falling falling falling . . .

She awakened with a start and blinked her eyes in the sunshine. She found she was clutching the baby so hard that it had begun to cry. She got to her feet, trembling from fright of the dream, remembering Silas and the white man and Silas' running her out of the house and the white man's coming. Silas was standing in the front yard; she caught her breath. Yes, she had to go and head that white man off! Naw! She could not do that, not with Silas standing there with that whip in his hand. If she tried to climb any of those slopes he would see her surely. And Silas would never forgive her for something like that. If it were anybody but a white man it would be different.

Then, while standing there on the edge of the slope looking wonderingly at Silas striking the whip against his overall-leg—and then, while standing there looking—she froze. There came from the hills a distant throb. Lawd! The baby whimpered. She loosened her arms. The throb grew louder, droning. Hes comin fas! She wanted to run to Silas and beg him not to bother the white man. But he had that whip in his hand. She should not have done what she had done last



## THE LOVE-MAKERS

a cloud of dust. She fell to her knees and hugged the baby close. She heard another shot, but the car was roaring over the top of the southern hill. Fear was gone now. Down the slope she ran. Silas was standing on the porch, holding his gun and looking at the fleeing car. Then she saw him go to the white man lying in dust and stoop over him. He caught one of the man's legs and dragged the body into the middle of the road. Then he turned and came slowly back to the house. She ran, holding the baby, and fell at his feet.

"Silas!"

### IV

"Git up, Sarah!"

His voice was hard and cold. She lifted her eyes and saw blurred black feet. She wiped tears away with dusty fingers and pulled up. Something took speech from her and she stood with bowed shoulders. Silas was standing still, mute; the look on his face condemned her. It was as though he had gone far off and had stayed a long time and had come back changed even while she was standing there in the sunshine before him. She wanted to say something, to give herself. She cried.

"Git the chile up, Sarah!"

She lifted the baby and stood waiting for him to speak, to tell her something to change all this. But he said nothing. He walked toward the house. She followed. As she attempted to go in, he blocked the way. She jumped to one side as he threw the red cloth outdoors to the ground. The new shoes came next. Then Silas heaved the baby's cradle. It hit the porch and a rocker splintered; the cradle swayed for a second, then fell to the ground, lifting a cloud of brown dust against the sun. All of her clothes and the baby's clothes were thrown out.

"Silas!"

She cried, seeing blurred objects sailing through the air and hearing them hit softly in the dust.

"Git yo things n go!"

"Silas!"

"Ain no use yuh sayin *nothin* now!"

"But theyll kill yuh!"

"There ain nothin Ah kin do. N there ain nothin yuh kin

do. Yuh done done too Gawddam much awready. Git yo things n go!"

"Theyll kill huh, Silas!"

He pushed her off the porch.

"GIT YO THINGS N GO T AN PEELS!"

"Les *both* go, Silas!"

"Ahm stayin here till they come back!"

She grabbed his arm and he slapped her hand away. She dropped to the edge of the porch and sat looking at the ground.

"Go way," she said quietly. "Go way fo they comes. Ah dint mean no harm . . ."

"Go way fer whut?"

"Theyll kill huh . . ."

"It don make no difference." He looked out over the sun-filled fields. "Fer ten years Ah slaved mah life out t git mah farm free . . ." His voice broke off. His lips moved as though a thousand words were spilling silently out of his mouth, as though he did not have breath enough to give them sound. He looked to the sky, and then back to the dust. "Now, its all gone. *Gone* . . . Ef Ah run erway, Ah ain got nothin. Ef Ah stay n fight, Ah ain got nothin. It dont make no difference which way Ah go. Gawd! Gawd, Ah wish all them white folks wuz dead! *Dead*, Ah tell huh! Ah wish Gawd would kill em *all!*"

She watched him run a few steps and stop. His throat swelled. He lifted his hands to his face; his fingers trembled. Then he bent to the ground and cried. She touched his shoulders.

"Silas!"

He stood up. She saw he was staring at the white man's body lying in the dust in the middle of the road. She watched him walk over to it. He began to talk to no one in particular; he simply stood over the dead white man and talked out of his life, out of a deep and final sense that now it was all over and nothing could make any difference.

"The white folks ain never gimme a chance! They ain never give no black man a chance! There ain nothin in yo whole life huh kin keep from em! They take yo lan! They take yo freedom! They take yo women! N then they take yo life!"

He turned to her, screaming. "N then Ah gits stabbed in

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"n back by mah own blood! When mah eyes is on the white folks to keep em from killin me, mah own blood trips me up!" He knelt in the dust again and sobbed; after a bit he looked to the sky, his face wet with tears. "Ahm gonna be hard like they is! So hep me, Gawd, Ahm gonna be *hard!* When they come fer me Ahm gonna *be here!* N when they git me outta here theys gonna *know* Ahm gone! Ef Gawd lets me live Ahm gonna make em *feel it!*" He stopped and tried to get his breath. "But, Lawd, Ah don wanna be this way! I don mean nothin! Yuh die ef yuh fight! Yuh die ef yuh don fight! Either way yuh die n it don mean nothin . . ."

He was lying flat on the ground, the side of his face deep in dust. Sarah stood nursing the baby with eyes black and stony. Silas pulled up slowly and stood again on the porch.

"Git on t An Peels, Sarah!"

A dull roar came from the south. They both turned. A long streak of brown dust was weaving down the hillside.

"Silas!"

"Go on cross the fiels, Sarah!"

"We kin *both* go! Git the hosses!"

He pushed her off the porch, grabbed her hand, and led her to the rear of the house, past the well, to where a path led up a slope to the elm tree.

"Silas!"

"Yuh git on fo they ketch yuh too!"

Blind from tears, she went across the swaying fields, stumbling over blurred grass. It ain no use! She knew it was now too late to make him change his mind. The calves of her legs knotted. Suddenly her throat tightened, aching. She stopped, closed her eyes and tried to stem a flood of sorrow that drenched her. Yes, killing of white men by black men and killing of black men by white men went on in spite of the hope of white bright days and the desire of dark black nights and the long gladness of green cornfields in summer and the deep dream of sleepy grey skies in winter. And when killing started it went on, like a river flowing. Oh, she felt sorry for Silas! Silas. . . . He was following that long river of blood. Lawd, how come he wans t stay there like tha? And he did not want to die; she knew he hated dying by the way he talked of it. Yet he followed the old

river of blood, knowing that it meant nothing. He followed it, cursing and whimpering. But he followed it. She stared before her at the dry, dusty grass. Somehow, men, black men and white men, land and houses, green cornfields and grey skies, gladness and dreams, were all a part of that which made life good. Yes, somehow, they were linked, like the spokes in a spinning wheel. She felt they were. She knew they were. She felt it when she breathed and knew it when she looked. But she could not say how; she could not put her finger on it and when she thought hard about it it became all mixed up, like milk spilling suddenly. Or else it knotted in her throat and chest in a hard aching lump, like the one she felt now. She touched her face to the baby's face and cried again.

There was a loud blare of auto horns. The growing roar made her turn around. Silas was standing, seemingly unafraid, leaning against a post of the porch. The long line of cars came speeding in clouds of dust. Silas moved toward the door and went in. Sarah ran down the slope a piece, coming again to the elm tree. Her breath was slow and hard. The cars stopped in front of the house. There was a steady drone of motors and drifting clouds of dust. For a moment she could not see what was happening. Then on all sides white men with pistols and rifles swarmed over the fields. She dropped to her knees, unable to take her eyes away, unable it seemed to breathe. A shot rang out. A white man fell, rolling over, face downward.

"Hes gotta gun!"

"Git back!"

"Lay down!"

The white men ran back and crouched behind cars. Three more shots came from the house. She looked, her head and eyes aching. She rested the baby in her lap and shut her eyes. Her knees sank into the dust. More shots came, but it was no use looking now. She knew it all by heart. She could feel it happening even before it happened. There were men killing and being killed. Then she jerked up, being compelled to look.

"Burn the bastard out!"

"Set the sonofabitch on fire!"

"Cook the coon!"

"Smoke im out!"

She saw two white men on all fours creeping past the well. One carried a gun and the other a red tin can. When they reached the back steps the one with the tin can crept under the house and crept out again. Then both rose and ran. Shots. One fell. A yell went up. A yellow tongue of fire licked out from under the back steps.

"Burn the nigger!"

"C mon out, nigger, n git yos!"

She watched from the hill-slope; the back steps blazed. The white men fired a steady stream of bullets. Black smoke spiraled upward in the sunshine. Shots came from the house. The white men crouched out of sight, behind their cars.

"Make up your mind, nigger!"

"C mon out er burn, yuh black bastard!"

"Yuh think yuhre white now, nigger?"

The shack blazed, flanked on all sides by whirling smoke filled with flying sparks. She heard the distant hiss of flames. White men were crawling on their stomachs. Now and then they stopped, aimed, and fired into the bulging smoke. She looked with a tense numbness; she looked, waiting for Silas to scream, or run out. But the house crackled and blazed, spouting yellow plumes to the blue sky. The white men shot again, sending a hail of bullets into the furious pillars of smoke. And still she could not see Silas running out, or hear his voice calling. Then she jumped, standing. There was a loud crash; the roof caved in. A black chimney loomed amid crumbling wood. Flames roared and black smoke billowed, hiding the house. The white men stood up, no longer afraid. Again she waited for Silas, waited to see him fight his way out, waited to hear his call. Then she breathed a long, slow breath, emptying her lungs. She knew now. Silas had killed as many as he could and stayed on to burn, had stayed without a murmur. She filled her lungs with a quick gasp as the walls fell in; the house was hidden by eager plumes of red. She turned and ran with the baby in her arms, ran blindly across the fields, crying "Naw, Gawd!"



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"We had that art from our mother," Maria responded proudly.

"Then we are saved. We will make enchiladas, tortillas, tamales. We will sell them to the people of Las Pasturas del Cielo."

"Will those people buy, do you think?" Maria asked skeptically.

"Listen to this from me, Maria. In Monterey there are several places where tortillas, only one finger as good as ours, are sold. And those people who sell them are very rich. They have a new dress thrice a year. And do their tortillas compare with ours? I ask that of you, remembering our mother."

Maria's eyes brimmed with tears of emotion. "They do not," she declared passionately. "In the whole world there are none like those tortillas beaten by the sainted hands of our mother."

"Well, then, adelante!" said Rosa with finality. "If they are so good, the people will buy."

There followed a week of frenzied preparation in which the perspiring sisters scrubbed and decorated. When they had finished, their little house wore a new coat of whitewash inside and out. Geranium cuttings were planted by the doorstep, and the trash of years had been collected and burned. The front room of the house was transformed into a restaurant containing two tables which were covered with yellow oilcloth. A pine board on the fence next to the county road proclaimed: TORTILLAS, ENCHILADAS, TAMALES AND SOME OTHER SPANISH COOKINGS, R. & M. LOPEZ.

Business did not come with a rush. Indeed very little came at all. The sisters sat at their own yellow tables and waited. They were childlike and jovial and not very clean. Sitting in the chairs they waited on fortune. But let a customer enter the shop, and they leaped instantly to attention. They laughed delightedly at everything their client said; they boasted of their ancestry and of the marvellous texture of their tortillas. They rolled their sleeves to the elbows to show the whiteness of their skin in passionate denial of Indian blood. But very few customers came. The sisters began to find difficulties in their business. They could not

make a quantity of their product, for it would spoil if kept for long. Tamales require fresh meat. So it was that they began to set traps for birds and rabbits; sparrows, black-birds and larks were kept in cages until they were needed for tamales. And still the business languished.

One morning Rosa confronted her sister. "You must harness old Lindo, Maria. There are no more corn husks." She placed a piece of silver in Maria's hand. "Buy only a few in Monterey," she said. "When the business is better we will buy very many." Maria obediently kissed her and started out toward the shed.

"And Maria—if there is money over, a sweet for you and for me—a big one."

When Maria drove back to the house that afternoon, she found her sister strangely quiet. The shrieks, the little queals, the demands for every detail of the journey, which usually followed a reunion, were missing. Rosa sat in a chair at one of the tables, and on her face there was a scowl of concentration.

Maria approached timidly. "I bought the husks very cheaply," she said. "And here, Rosa, here is the sweet. The biggest kind, and only four cents!"

Rosa took the proffered candy bar and put one huge end of it in her mouth. She still scowled with thought. Maria settled herself nearby, smiling gently, quizzically, silently pleading for a share of her sister's burden. Rosa sat like a rock and sucked her candy bar. Suddenly she glared into Maria's eyes. "Today," she said solemnly, "today I gave myself to a customer."

Maria sobbed with excitement and interest.

"Do not make a mistake," Rosa continued. "I did not take money. The man had eaten three enchiladas—three!"

Maria broke into a thin, childish wail of nervousness.

"Be still," said Rosa. "What do you think I should do now? It is necessary to encourage our customers if we are to succeed. And he had three, Maria, three enchiladas! And he paid for them. Well? What do you think?"

Maria sniffed and clutched a moral bravery in the face of her sister's argument. "I think, Rosa, I think our mother would be glad, and I think your own soul would be glad."

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if you should ask forgiveness of the Mother Virgin and of Santa Rosa."

Rosa smiled broadly and took Maria in her arms. "That is what I did. Just as soon as he went away. He was hardly out of the house before I did that."

Maria tore herself away, and with streaming eyes went into her bedroom. Ten minutes she kneeled before the little Virgin on the wall. Then she arose and flung herself into Rosa's arms. "Rosa, my sister," she cried happily. "I think —I think I shall encourage the customers, too."

The Lopez sisters smothered each other in a huge embrace and mingled their tears of joy.

That day marked the turning point of the affairs of the Lopez sisters. It is true that business did not flourish, but from then on, they sold enough of their "Spanish Cookings" to keep food in the kitchen and bright print dresses on their broad, round backs. They remained persistently religious. When either of them had sinned she went directly to the little porcelain Virgin, now conveniently placed in the hall to be accessible from both bedrooms, and prayed for forgiveness. Sins were not allowed to pile up. They confessed each one as it was committed. Under the Virgin there was a polished place on the floor where they had knelt in their nightdresses.

Life became very pleasant to the Lopez sisters. There was not even a taint of rivalry, for although Rosa was older and braver, they looked almost alike. Maria was a little fatter, but Rosa was a little taller, and there you had it.

Now the house was filled with laughter and with squeals of enthusiasm. They sang over the flat stones while they patted out the tortillas with their fat, strong hands. Let a customer say something funny, let Tom Breman say to them, as he ate his third tamale, "Rosa, you're living too high. This rich living is going to bust your gut wide open if you don't cut it out," and both of the sisters would be racked with giggles for half an hour afterwards. A whole day later, while they patted out the tortillas on the stone, they would remember this funny thing and laugh all over again. For these sisters knew how to preserve laughter, how to pet and coax it along until their spirits drank the last dregs of its potentiality. Don Tom was a fine man, they said.

A funny man—and a rich man. Once he ate five plates of chile con carne. But also, something you did not often find in a rich man, he was an *hombre fuerte*, oh, very strong! Over the tortilla stones they nodded their heads wisely and reminiscently at this observation, like two connoisseurs remembering a good wine.

It must not be supposed that the sisters were prodigal of their encouragement. They accepted no money for anything except their cooking. However, if a man ate three or more of their dishes, the soft hearts of the sisters broke with gratitude, and that man became a candidate for encouragement.

On an unfortunate night, a man whose appetite was not equal to three enchiladas offered to Rosa the money of shame. There were several other customers in the house at the time. The offer was cast into a crackle of conversation. Instantly the noise ceased, leaving a horrified silence. Maria hid her face in her hands. Rosa grew pale and then flushed brilliant with furious blood. She panted with emotion and her eyes sparkled. Her fat, strong hands rose like eagles and settled on her hips. When she spoke, it was with a curious emotional restraint. "It is an insult to me," she said huskily. "You do not know, perhaps, that General Vallejo is nearly our ancestor, so close as that we are related. In our veins pure blood is. What would General Vallejo say if he heard? Do you think his hand could stay from his sword to hear you insult two ladies so nearly in his family? Do you think it? You say to us, 'You are shameful women!' We, who make the finest, the thinnest tortillas in all California." She panted with effort to restrain herself.

"I didn't mean nothing," the offender whined. "Honest to God, Rosa, I didn't mean nothing."

Her anger left her then. One of her hands took flight from her hip, this time like a lark, and motioned almost sadly toward the door. "Go," she said gently. "I do not think you meant bad, but the insult is still." And as the culprit slunk out of the doorway, "Now, would anyone else like a little dish of chiles con frijoles? Which one here? Chiles con frijoles like none in the world."

Ordinarily they were happy, these sisters. Maria, whose nature was very delicate and sweet, planted more geraniums around the house, and lined the fence with hollyhocks. On

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a trip to Salinas, Rosa and Maria bought and presented to each other boudoir caps like inverted nests of blue and pink ribbons. It was the ultimate! Side by side they looked in a mirror and then turned their heads and smiled a little sadly at each other, thinking, "This is the great day. This is the time we shall remember, always as the happy time. What a shame it cannot last."

In fear that it would not last, Maria kept large vases of flowers in front of her Virgin.

But their foreboding came seldom upon them. Maria bought a little phonograph with records—tangos, waltzes. When the sisters worked over the stones, they set the machine to playing and patted out the tortillas in time to the music.

Inevitably, in the valley of the Pastures of Heaven, the whisper went about that the Lopez sisters were bad women. Ladies of the valley spoke coldly to them when they passed. It is impossible to say how these ladies knew. Certainly their husbands didn't tell them, but nevertheless they knew; they always know.

Before daylight on a Saturday morning, Maria carried out the old, string-mended harness and festooned it on the bones of Lindo. "Have courage, my friend," she said to the horse, as she buckled the crupper and, "The mouth, please, my Lindo," as she inserted the bit. Then she backed him between the shafts of an ancient buggy. Lindo purposely stumbled over the shafts, just as he had for thirty years. When Maria hooked the traces, he looked around at her with a heavy, philosophic sadness. Old Lindo had no interest in destinations any more. He was too old even to be excited about going home once he was out. Now he lifted his lips from his long, yellow teeth, and grinned despairingly. "The way is not long," Maria soothed him. "We will go slowly. You must not fear the journey, Lindo." But Lindo did fear the journey. He loathed the journey to Monterey and back.

The buggy sagged alarmingly when Maria clambered into it. She took the lines gingerly in her hands. "Go, my friend," she said, and fluttered the lines. Lindo shivered and looked around at her. "Do you hear? We must go! There are things to buy in Monterey." Lindo shook his head and drooped to

one knee in a kind of curtsey. "Listen to me, Lindo!" Maria cried imperiously. "I say we must go. I am firm! I am even angry." She fluttered the lines ferociously about his shoulders. Lindo drooped his head nearly to the earth, like a scenting hound, and moved slowly out of the yard. Nine miles he must go to Monterey, and nine miles back. Lindo knew it, and despaired of the knowledge. But now that her firmness and anger were over, Maria settled back in the seat and hummed the chorus of the "Waltz Moon" tango.

The hills glittered with dew. Maria, breathing the fresh damp air, sang more loudly, even Lindo found youth enough in his old nostrils to snort. A meadow lark flew ahead from post to post, singing furiously. Far ahead Maria saw a man walking in the road. Before she caught up with him, she knew from the shambling, ape-like stride that it was Allen Hueneke, the ugliest, shyest man in the valley.

Allen Hueneke not only walked like an ape, he looked like an ape. Little boys who wanted to insult their friends did so by pointing to Allen and saying, "There goes your brother." It was a deadly satire. Allen was so shy and so horrified at his appearance that he tried to grow whiskers to cover up his face, but the coarse, sparse stubble grew in the wrong places and only intensified his simian appearance. His wife had married him because she was thirty-seven, and because Allen was the only man of her acquaintance who could not protect himself. Later it developed that she was a woman whose system required jealousy properly to function. Finding nothing in Allen's life of which she could be jealous, she manufactured things. To her neighbors she told stories of his prowess with women, of his untrustworthiness, of his obscure delinquencies. She told these stories until she believed them, but her neighbors laughed behind her back when she spoke of Allen's sins, for everyone in the Pastures of Heaven knew how shy and terrified the ugly little man was.

The ancient Lindo stumbled abreast of Allen Hueneke. Maria tugged on the lines as though she pulled up a thunderously galloping steed. "Steady, Lindo! Be calm!" she called. At the slightest pressure of the lines, Lindo turned to stone and sunk into his loose-jointed, hang-necked posture of complete repose.

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"Good morning," said Maria politely.

Allen edged shyly over toward the side of the road. "Morning," he said, and turned to look with affected interest up a side hill.

"I go to Monterey," Maria continued. "Do you wish to ride?"

Allen squirmed and searched the sky for clouds or hawks. "I ain't going only to the bus stop," he said suddenly.

"And what then? It is a little ride, no?"

The man scratched among his whiskers, trying to make up his mind. And then, more to end the situation than for the sake of a ride, he climbed into the buggy beside the fat Maria. She rolled aside to make room for him, and then oozed back. "Lindo, go!" she called. "Lindo, do you hear me? Go before I grow angry again." The lines clattered about Lindo's neck. His nose dropped toward the ground, and he sauntered on.

For a little while they rode in silence, but soon Maria remembered how polite it was to encourage conversation. "You go on a trip, yes?" she asked.

Allen glared at an oak tree and said nothing.

"I have not been on a train," Maria confided after a moment, "but my sister, Rosa, has ridden on trains. Once she rode to San Francisco, and once she rode back. I have heard very rich men say it is good to travel. My own sister, Rosa, says so too."

"I ain't going only to Salinas," said Allen.

"Ah, of course I have been there many times. Rosa and I have such friends in Salinas. Our mother came from there. And our father often went there with wood."

Allen struggled against his embarrassment. "Couldn't get the old Ford going, or I'd have gone in it."

"You have, then, a Ford?" Maria was impressed.

"Just an old Ford."

"We have said, Rosa and I, that some day we, too, may have a Ford. Then we will travel to many places. I have heard very rich men say it is good to travel."

As though to punctuate the conversation, an old Ford appeared over the hill and came roaring down on them. Maria gripped the lines. "Lindo, be calm!" she called.

Lindo paid not the slightest attention either to Maria or to the Ford.

Mr. and Mrs. Munroe were in the Ford. Bert craned his neck back as they passed. "God! Did you see that?" he demanded, laughing. "Did you see that old woman-killer with Maria Lopez?"

Mrs. Munroe smiled.

"Say," Bert cried. "It'd be a good joke to tell old lady Hueneker we saw her old man running off with Maria Lopez."

"Don't you do anything of the kind," his wife insisted.

"But it'd be a good joke. You know how she talks about him."

"No, don't you do it, Bert!"

Meanwhile Maria drove on, conversing guilelessly with her reluctant guest. "You do not come to our house for enchiladas. There are no enchiladas like ours. For look! We learned from our mother. When our mother was living, it was said as far as San Juan, even as far as Gilroy, that no one else could make tortillas so flat, so thin. You must know it is the beating, always the beating that makes goodness and thinness to a tortilla. No one ever beat so long as our mother, not even Rosa. I go now to Monterey for flour because it is cheaper there."

Allen Hueneker sank into his side of the seat and wished for the bus station.

It was late afternoon before Maria neared home again. "Soon we are there," she called happily to Lindo. "Have courage, my friend, the way is short now." Maria was bubbling with anticipation. In a riot of extravagance she had bought four candy bars, but that was not all. For Rosa she had a present, a pair of broad silken garters with huge red poppies appliquéd on their sides. In her imagination she could see Rosa putting them on and then lifting her skirt, but very modestly, of course. The two of them would look at the garters in a mirror standing on the floor. Rosa would point her toe to a trifle, and then the sisters would cry with happiness.

In the yard Maria slowly unharnessed Lindo. It was good, she knew, to put off joy, for by doing so, one increased joy. The house was very quiet. There were no

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vehicles in front to indicate the presence of customers. Maria hung up the old harness, and turned Lindo into the pasture. Then she took out the candy bars and the garters and walked slowly into the house. Rosa sat at one of the little tables, a silent, restrained Rosa, a grim and suffering Rosa. Her eyes seemed glazed and sightless. Her fat, firm hands were clenched on the table in front of her. She did not turn nor give any sign of recognition when Maria entered. Maria stopped and stared at her.

"Rosa," she said timidly: "I'm back home, Rosa."

Her sister turned slowly. "Yes," she said.

"Are you sick, Rosa?"

The glazed eyes had turned back to the table again. "No."

"I have a present, Rosa. Look, Rosa." She held up the magnificent garters.

Slowly, very slowly, Rosa's eyes crept up to the brilliant red poppies and then to Maria's face. Maria was poised to break into squealing enthusiasm. Rosa's eyes dropped, and two fat tears ran down the furrows beside her nose.

"Rosa, do you see the present? Don't you like them, Rosa? Won't you put them on, Rosa?"

"You are my good little sister."

"Rosa, tell me, what is the matter? You are sick. You must tell your Maria. Did someone come?"

"Yes," said Rosa hollowly, "the sheriff came."

Now Maria fairly chattered with excitement. "The sheriff, he came? Now we are on the road. Now we will be rich. How many enchiladas, Rosa? Tell me how many for the sheriff?"

Rosa shook off her apathy. She went to Maria and put motherly arms about her. "My poor little sister," she said. "Now we cannot ever sell any more enchiladas. Now we must live again in the old way with no new dresses."

"Rosa, you are crazy. Why you talk this way to me?"

"It is true. It was the sheriff. 'I have a complaint,' he said to me. 'I have a complaint that you are running a bad house.' 'But that is a lie,' I said. 'A lie and an insult to our mother and to General Vallejo.' 'I have a complaint,' he told me. 'You must close your doors or else I must ar-

rest you for running a bad house.' 'But it is a lie,' I tried to make him understand. 'I got a complaint this afternoon,' he said. 'When I have a complaint, there is nothing I can do, for see, Rosa,' he said to me as a friend, 'I am only the servant of the people who make complaints.' And now you see, Maria, my sister, we must go back to the old living." She left the stricken Maria and turned back to her table. For a moment Maria tried to understand it, and then she sobbed hysterically. "Be still, Maria! I have been thinking. You know it is true that we will starve if we cannot sell enchiladas. Do not blame me too much when I tell you this. I have made up my mind. See, Maria! I will go to San Francisco and be a bad woman." Her head dropped low over her fat hands. Maria's sobbing had stopped. She crept close to her sister.

"For money?" she whispered in horror.

"Yes," cried Rosa bitterly. "For money. For a great deal of money. And may the good mother forgive me."

Maria left her then, and scuttled into the hallway where she stood in front of the porcelain Mary. "I have placed candles," she cried. "I have put flowers every day. Holy Mother, what is the matter with us? Why do you let this happen?" Then she dropped on her knees and prayed, fifty Hail Marys! She crossed herself and rose to her feet. Her face was strained and determined.

In the other room Rosa still sat bent over her table.

"Rosa," Maria cried shrilly. "I am your sister. I am what you are." She gulped a great breath. "Rosa, I will go to San Francisco with you. I, too, will be a bad woman—"

Then the reserve of Rosa broke. She stood up and opened her huge embrace. And for a long time the Lopez sisters cried hysterically in each other's arms.

From:  
**NANA**

*by Emile Zola*

*Nana is literature's ultimate tramp. Yet if she were to come to the worst of endings—Zola's morality is never very subtle—it would not be because of her total lack of goodness. Witness her tender moment here with the young schoolboy; her tragic flaw is not pitilessness—it is simply her undeniable womanhood.*

"Strawberries! Strawberries! There are some here; I can feel them. A plate, Zoé! Come and pick strawberries."

Dropping her sunshade, Nana crouched down in the mire under the full force of the downpour. With drenched hands she began gathering the fruit among the leaves. But Zoé in the meantime brought no plate, and when the young woman rose to her feet again she was frightened. She thought she had seen a shadow close to her.

"It's some beast!" she screamed.

But she stood rooted to the path in utter amazement. It was a man, and she recognized him.

"Gracious me, it's Baby! What are you doing there, Baby?"

"I've come—that's all!" replied Georges.

Her head swam. "You knew I'd come because the gardener told you? Oh, that poor child! Why, he's soaking!"

"Oh, I'll explain that to you! The rain caught me on my way here, and then, as I didn't wish to go upstream as far as Gumières, I crossed the Choue and fell into a blessed hole."

Nana forgot the strawberries. She was trembling and full of pity. That poor dear Zizi in a hole full of water! She drew him with her in the direction of the house and spoke of making a roaring fire.

"You know," he murmured, stopping her among the shadows, "I was in hiding because I was afraid of being scolded, like in Paris, when I come and see you and you're not expecting me."

She made no reply but burst out laughing and gave him a kiss on the forehead. Up till today she had always treated him like a naughty urchin, never taking his declarations seriously and amusing herself at his expense as though he were a little man of no consequence whatever.

There was much ado to install him in the house. She absolutely insisted on the fire being lit in her bedroom, the most comfortable place for his reception. Georges had not surprised Zoé, who was used to all kinds of encounters, but the gardener, who brought the wood upstairs, was greatly nonplused at sight of this dripping gentleman to whom he was certain he had not opened the front door. He was, however, dismissed, since he was no longer wanted.

A lamp lit up the room, and the fire burned with a great bright flame.

"He'll never get dry, and he'll catch cold," said Nana, seeing Georges beginning to shiver.

And there were no men's trousers in her house! She was on the point of calling the gardener back when an idea struck her. Zoé, who was unpacking the trunks in the dressing room, brought her mistress a change of underwear, consisting of a shift and some petticoats with a dressing jacket.

"Oh, that's wonderful!" cried the young woman. "Zizi can put 'em all on. You're not angry with me, eh? When your clothes are dry you can put them on again, and then off with you, as fast as fast can be, so as not to have a second

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ing from your mamma. Make haste! I'm going to change my things, too, in the dressing room."

Ten minutes afterward, when she reappeared in a tea gown, she clasped her hands in a perfect ecstasy.

"Oh, the darling! How sweet he looks dressed like a little woman!"

He had simply slipped on a long nightgown with an insertion front, a pair of worked drawers and the dressing jacket, which was a long cambric garment trimmed with lace. Thus attired and with his delicate young arms showing and his bright damp hair falling almost to his shoulders, he looked just like a girl.

"Why, he's as slim as I am!" said Nana, putting her arm round his waist. "Zoé, just come here and see how it suits him. It's made for him, eh? All except the bodice part, which is too large. He hasn't got as much as I have, poor, dear Zizi!"

"Oh, to be sure, I'm a bit wanting there," murmured Georges with a smile.

All three grew very merry about it. Nana had set to work buttoning the dressing jacket from top to bottom so as to make him quite decent. Then she turned him round as though he were a doll, gave him little thumps, made the skirt stand well out behind. After this she asked him questions. Was he comfortable? Did he feel warm? Zounds, yes, he was comfortable! Nothing fitted more closely and warmly than a woman's shift; had he been able, he would always have worn one. He moved round and about therein, delighted with the fine linen and the soft touch of that unmanly garment, in the folds of which he thought he discovered some of Nana's own warm life.

Meanwhile Zoé had taken the soaked clothes down to the kitchen in order to dry them as quickly as possible in front of a vine-branch fire. Then Georges, as he lounged in an easy chair, ventured to make a confession.

"I say, are you going to feed this evening? I'm dying of hunger. I haven't dined."

Nana was vexed. The great silly thing to go sloping off from Mamma's with an empty stomach, just to chuck himself into a hole full of water! But she was as hungry as a hunter too. They certainly must eat. Only they would



weather had undergone a brisk change; the skies were clearing, and a full moon lit up the country with its golden disk of light. A sovereign quiet reigned over the valley. It seemed wider and larger as it opened on the immense distances of the plain, where the trees loomed like little shadowy islands amid a shining and waveless lake. And Nana grew tenderhearted, felt herself a child again. Most surely she had dreamed of nights like this at an epoch which she could not recall. Since leaving the train every object of sensation—the wide countryside, the green things with their pungent scents, the house, the vegetables—had stirred her to such a degree that now it seemed to her as if she had left Paris twenty years ago. Yesterday's existence was far, far away, and she was full of sensations of which she had no previous experience. Georges, meanwhile, was giving her neck little coaxing kisses, and this added to her sweet unrest. With hesitating hand she pushed him from her, as though he were a child whose affectionate advances were fatiguing, and once more she told him that he ought to take his departure. He did not gainsay her. All in good time—he would go all in good time!

But a bird raised its song and again was silent. It was a robin in an elder tree below the window.

"Wait one moment," whispered Georges, "the lamp's frightening him. I'll put it out."

And when he came back and took her waist again he added, "We'll relight it in a minute."

Then as she listened to the robin and the boy pressed against her side, Nana remembered. Ah yes, it was in novels that she had got to know all this! In other days she would have given her heart to have a full moon and robins and a lad dying of love for her. Great God, she could have cried, so good and charming did it all seem to her! Beyond a doubt she had been born to live honestly! So she pushed Georges away again, and he grew yet bolder.

"No, let me be. I don't care about it. It would be very wicked at your age. Now listen—I'll always be your mamma."

A sudden feeling of shame overcame her. She was blushing exceedingly, and yet not a soul could see her. The room behind them was full of black night while the country

stretched before them in silence and lifeless solitude. Never had she known such a sense of shame before. Little by little she felt her power of resistance ebbing away, and that despite her embarrassed efforts to the contrary. That disguise of his, that woman's shift and that dressing jacket set her laughing again. It was as though a girl friend were teasing her.

"Oh, it's not right, it's not right!" she stammered after a last effort.

And with that, in face of the lovely night, she sank like a young virgin into the arms of this mere child.

The house slept.

## THE KNIFE OF THE TIMES

*by William Carlos Williams*

*Love assumes many guises—if not all  
“normal,” nonetheless all “facts of life.”  
And if sometimes love’s true nature is  
long in being understood, the curious  
inevitability dramatized in this brief  
story suggests that this, too, is a  
way things are.*

As the years passed the girls who had been such intimates as children still remained true to one another.

Ethel by now had married. Maura had married; the one having removed to Harrisburg, the other to New York City. And both began to bring up families. Ethel especially went in for children. Within a very brief period, comparatively speaking, she had three of them, then four, then five and finally six. And through it all, she kept in constant touch with her girlhood friend, dark-eyed Maura, by writing long intimate letters.

At first these had been newsy chit chat, ending always however in continued protestations of that love which the women had enjoyed during their childhood. Maura showed them to her husband and both enjoyed their full newsy quality dealing as they did with people and scenes with which both were familiar.

But after several years, as these letters continued to flow,

there came a change in them. First the personal note grew more confidential. Ethel told about her children, how she had had one after the other—to divert her mind, to distract her thoughts from their constant brooding. Each child would raise her hopes of relief, each anticipated delivery brought only renewed disappointment. She confided more and more in Maura. She loved her husband; it was not that. In fact, she didn't know what it was save that she, Ethel, could never get her old friend Maura out of her mind.

Until at last the secret was out. It is you, Maura, that I want. Nothing but you. Nobody but you can appease my grief. Forgive me if I distress you with this confession. It is the last thing in this world that I desire. But I cannot contain myself longer.

Thicker and faster came the letters. Full love missives they were now without the least restraint.

Ethel wrote letters now such as Maura wished she might at some time in her life have received from a man. She was told that all these years she had been dreamed of, passionately, without rival, without relief. Now, surely, Maura did not dare show the letters to her husband. He would not understand.

They affected her strangely, they frightened her, but they caused a shrewd look to come into her dark eyes and she packed them carefully away where none should ever come upon them. She herself was occupied otherwise but she felt tenderly toward Ethel, loved her in an old remembered manner—but that was all. She was disturbed by the turn Ethel's mind had taken and thanked providence her friend and she lived far enough apart to keep them from embarrassing encounters.

But, in spite of the lack of adequate response to her advances, Ethel never wavered, never altered in her passionate appeals. She begged her friend to visit her, to come to her, to live with her. She spoke of her longings, to touch the velvet flesh of her darling's breasts, her thighs. She longed to kiss her to sleep, to hold her in her arms. Franker and franker became her outspoken ~~lusts~~. For which she begged indulgence.

Once she implored Maura to wear a silk chemise ~~white~~

she was sending, to wear it for a week and to return it to her, to Ethel, unwashed, that she might wear it in her turn constantly upon her.

Then, after twenty years, one day Maura received a letter from Ethel asking her to meet her—and her mother, in New York. They were expecting a sister back from Europe on the *Mauretania* and they wanted Maura to be there—for old times' sake.

Maura consented. With strange feelings of curiosity and not a little fear, she stood at the gate of the Pennsylvania station waiting for her friend to come out at the wicket on the arrival of the Harrisburg express. Would she be alone? Would her mother be with her really? Was it a hoax? Was the woman crazy, after all? And, finally, would she recognize her?

There she was and her mother along with her. After the first stare, the greetings on all sides were quiet, courteous and friendly. The mother dominated the moment. Her keen eyes looked Maura up and down once, then she asked the time, when would the steamer dock, how far was the pier and had they time for lunch first?

There was plenty of time. Yes, let's lunch. But first Ethel had a small need to satisfy and asked Maura if she would show her the way. Maura led her friend to the Pay Toilets and there, after inserting the coin, Ethel opened the door and, before Maura could find the voice to protest, drew her in with herself and closed the door after her.

What a meeting! What a release! Ethel took her friend into her arms and between tears and kisses, tried in some way, as best she could, to tell her of her happiness. She fondled her old playmate, hugged her, lifted her off her feet in the eager impression of her desire, whispering into her ear, stroking her hair, her face, touching her lips, her eyes; holding her, holding her about as if she could never again release her.

No one could remain cold to such an appeal, as pathetic to Maura as it was understandable and sincere, she tried her best to modify its fury, to abate it, to control. But, failing that, she did what she could to appease her old friend. She loved Ethel, truly, but all this show was beyond her. She did not understand it, she did not know how to return

it. But she was not angry, she found herself in fact in tears, her heart touched, her lips willing.

Time was slipping by and they had to go.

At lunch Ethel kept her foot upon the toe of Maura's slipper. It was a delirious meal for Maura with thinking of old times, watching the heroic beauty of the old lady and, while keeping up a chatter of small conversation, intermixed with recollections, to respond secretly as best she could to Ethel's insistent pressures.

At the pier there was a long line waiting to be admitted to the enclosure. It was no use—Ethel from behind constantly pressed her body against her embarrassed friend, embarrassed not from lack of understanding or sympathy, but for fear lest one of the officers and Customs inspectors who were constantly watching them should detect something out of the ordinary.

But the steamer was met, the sister saluted; the day came to an end and the hour of parting found Ethel still keeping close, close to the object of her lifelong adoration.

What shall I do? thought Maura afterward on her way home, on the train alone. Ethel had begged her to visit her, to spend a week at least with her, to sleep with her. Why not?

## HOW BEAUTIFUL WITH SHOES

by *Wilbur Daniel Steele*

*"Go 'way!" cries Amarantha to her lover.  
"Lea' me be!" A day before she had  
taken to him gladly, but she has seen  
something now, something which never  
defines itself to her simple mind, but  
which suggests that mere sensual  
gratification is not enough. Love, says  
Steele in one of the truly great stories  
of our time, is something deeper—  
beautiful, mystic, unspeakable.*

By the time the milking was finished, the sow, which had farrowed the past week, was making such a row that the girl spilled a pint of the warm milk down the trough-lead to quiet the animal before taking the pail to the well-house. Then in the quiet she heard a sound of hoofs on the bridge, where the road crossed the creek a hundred yards below the house, and she set the pail down on the ground beside her bare, barn-soiled feet. She picked it up again. She set it down. It was as if she calculated its weight.

That was what she was doing, as a matter of fact, setting off against its pull toward the well-house the pull of that wagon team in the road, with little more of personal will or wish in the matter than has a wooden weather-vane between two currents in the wind. And as with the vane, so with the wooden girl—the added behest of a whip-lash cracking in the distance was enough; leaving the pail at the barn door, she set off in a deliberate, docile beeline through the cow-yard, over the fence, and down in a



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pring. A slow warmth pervaded the girl, formless, featureless, almost impersonal.

Her betrothed pulled her head back by the braid of her elbow hair. He studied her face, his brows gathered and his chin out.

"Listen, Mare, you wouldn't leave nobody else hug and kiss you, dang you!"

She shook her head, without vehemence or anxiety.

"Who's that?" She harkened up the road. "Pull your team out," she added, as a Ford came in sight around the bend above the house, driven at speed. "Geddap!" she said to the mules herself.

But the car came to a halt near them, and one of the five men crowded in it called, "Come on, Ruby, climb in. They's a loony loose out o' Dayville Asylum, and they got him trailed over somewhere on Split Ridge and Judge North phoned up to Slosson's store for ever'body come help circle him—come on, hop the runnin'-board!"

Ruby hesitated, an eye on his team.

"Scared, Ruby?" The driver raced his engine. "They say this boy's a killer."

"Mare, take the team in and tell Pa." The car was already moving when Ruby jumped in. A moment after it had sounded on the bridge it was out of sight.

"Amarantha, Amarantha, why don't you come, Amarantha?"

Returning from her errand, fifteen minutes later, Mare heard the plaint lifted in the twilight. The sun had dipped behind the back ridge, and though the sky was still bright with day, the dusk began to smoke up out of the plowed field like a ground-fog. The girl had returned through it, got the milk, and started toward the well-house before the widow saw her.

"Daughter, seems to me you might!" she expostulated without change of key. "Here's some young man friend o' yours stopped to say howdy, and I been rackin' my lungs out after you. . . . Put that milk in the cool and come!"

Some young man friend? But there was no good to be got from puzzling. Mare poured the milk in the pan in the dark of the low house over the well, and as she came out, stooping, she saw a figure waiting for her, black in silhouette against the yellowing sky.

"Who are you?" she asked, a native timidity making her sound sulky.

"Amarantha!" the fellow mused. "That's poetry." And she knew then that she did not know him.

She walked past, her arms straight down and her eyes front. Strangers always affected her with a kind of muscular terror simply by being strangers. So she gained the kitchen steps, aware by his tread that he followed. There, taking courage at sight of her mother in the doorway, she turned on him, her eyes down at the level of his knees.

"Who are you and what d'y' want?"

He still mused. "Amarantha! Amarantha in Carolina! That makes me happy!"

Mare hazarded one upward look. She saw that he had red hair, brown eyes, and hollows under his cheekbones, and though the green sweater he wore on top of a gray overall was plainly not meant for him, sizes too large as far as girth went, yet he was built so long of limb that his wrists came inches out of the sleeves and made his big hands look even bigger.

Mrs. Doggett complained. "Why don't you introduce us, daughter?"

The girl opened her mouth and closed it again. Her mother, unaware that no sound had come out of it, smiled and nodded, evidently taking to the tall, homely fellow and tickled by the way he could not seem to get his eyes off her daughter. But the daughter saw none of it, all her attention centered upon the stranger's hands.

Restless, hard-fleshed, and chap-bitten, they were like a countryman's hands; but the fingers were longer than the ordinary, and slightly spatulate at their ends, and these ends were slowly and continuously at play among themselves.

The girl could not have explained how it came to her to be frightened and at the same time to be calm, for she was inept with words. It was simply that in an animal way she knew animals, knew them in health and ailing, and when they were ailing she knew by instinct, as her father had known, how to move so as not to fret them.

Her mother had gone in to light up; from beside the lampshelf she called back, "If he's aimin' to stay to supper you should've told me, Amarantha, though I guess there's

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plenty of the side-meat to go 'round, if you'll bring me in a few more turnips and potatoes, though it is late."

At the words the man's cheeks moved in and out. "I'm hungry," he said.

Mare nodded deliberately. Deliberately, as if her mother could hear her, she said over her shoulder, "I'll go get the potatoes and turnips, ma." While she spoke she was moving, slowly, softly, at first, toward the right of the yard, where the fence gave over into the field. Unluckily her mother spied her through the window.

"Amarantha, were *are* you goin'?"

"I'm goin' to get the potatoes and turnips." She neither raised her voice nor glanced back, but lengthened her stride. "He won't hurt her," she said to herself. "He won't hurt her; it's me, not her," she kept repeating, while she got over the fence and down into the shadow that lay more than ever like a fog on the field.

The desire to believe that it actually did hide her, the temptation to break from her rapid but orderly walk grew till she could no longer fight it. She saw the road willows only a dash ahead of her. She ran, her feet floundering among the furrows.

She neither heard nor saw him, but when she realized he was with her she knew he had been with her all the while. She stopped, and he stopped, and so they stood, with the dark open of the field all around. Glancing sidewise presently, she saw he was no longer looking at her with those strangely importunate brown eyes of his, but had raised them to the crest of the wooded ridge behind her.

By and by, "What does it make you think of?" he asked. And when she made no move to see, "Turn around and look!" he said, and though it was low and almost tender in its tone, she knew enough to turn.

A ray of the sunset hidden in the west struck through the tops of the topmost trees, far and small up there, a thin, bright hem.

"What does it make you think of, Amarantha? . . . Answer!"

"Fire," she made herself say.

"Or blood."

"Or blood, yeh. That's right, or blood." She had heard a

Ford going up the road beyond the willows, and her attention was not on what she said.

The man soliloquized. "Fire and blood, both; spare one or the other, and where is beauty, the way the world is? It's an awful thing to have to carry, but Christ had it. Christ came with a sword. I love beauty, Amarantha. . . . I say, I love beauty!"

"Yeh, that's right, I hear." What she heard was the car stopping at the house.

"Not prettiness. Prettiness'll have to go with ugliness, because it's only ugliness triggered up. But beauty!" Now again he was looking at her. "Do you know how beautiful you are, Amarantha 'Amarantha sweet and fair'?" Of a sudden, reaching behind her, he began to unravel the meshes of her hairbraid, the long, flat-tipped fingers at once impatient and infinitely gentle. "'Braid no more that shining hair!'"

Flat-faced Mare Doggett tried to see around those glowing eyes so near to hers, but wise in her instinct, did not try too hard. "Yeh," she temporized. "I mean, no, I mean."

"Amarantha, I've come a long, long way for you. Will you come away with me now?"

"Yeh—that is—in a minute I will, mister—yeh . . ."

"Because you want to, Amarantha? Because you love me as I love you? Answer!"

"Yeh-sure uh . . . Ruby!"

The man tried to run, but there were six against him, coming up out of the dark that lay in the plowed ground. Mare stood where she was while they knocked him down and got a rope around him; after that she walked back toward the house with Ruby and Older Haskins, her father's cousin.

Ruby wiped his brow and felt of his muscles. "Gees you're lucky we come, Mare. We're no more'n past the town, when they come hollerin' he'd broke over this way."

When they came to the fence the girl sat on the rail for a moment and rebraided her hair before she went into the house, where they were making her mother smell at

Lots of cars were coming. Judge North was somebody said. When Mare heard this she went into the bedroom off the kitchen and got her shoes and pu

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on. They were brand new two-dollar shoes with cloth tops, and she had only begun to break them in last Sunday; she wished afterwards she had put her stockings on too, for they would have eased the seams. Or else that she had put on the old button pair, even though the soles were worn through.

Judge North arrived. He thought first of taking the loony straight through to Dayville that night, but then decided to keep him in the lock-up at the courthouse till morning and make the drive by day. Older Haskins stayed in, gentling Mrs. Doggett, while Ruby went out to help get the man into the Judge's sedan. Now that she had them on, Mare didn't like to take the shoes off till Older went; it might make him feel small, she thought.

Older Haskins had a lot of facts about the loony.

"His name's Humble Jewett," he told them. "They belong back in Breed County, all them Jewetts, and I don't reckon there's none of 'em that's not a mite unbalanced. He went to college though, worked his way, and he taught somethin' 'rother in some academy-school a spell, till he went off his head all of a sudden and took after folks with an axe. I remember it in the paper at the time. They give out one while how the Principal wasn't going to live, and there was others—there was a girl he tried to strangle. That was four-five year back."

Ruby came in guffawing. "Know the only thing they can get 'im to say, Mare? Only God thing he'll say is, 'Amarantha, she's goin' with me.' . . . Mare!"

"Yeh, I know."

The cover of the kettle the girl was handling slid off on the stove with a clatter. A sudden sick wave passed over her. She went out to the back, out into the air. It was not till now she knew how frightened she had been.

Ruby went home, but Older Haskins stayed to supper with them, and helped Mare do the dishes afterward; it was nearly nine when he left. The mother was already in bed, and Mare was about to sit down to get those shoes off her wretched feet at last, when she heard the cow carrying on up at the barn, lowing and kicking, and next minute the sow was in it with a horning note. It might be a fox passing by to get at the hen-house, or a weasel. Mare forgot her feet, took a broom-handle they used in boiling

clothes, opened the back door, and stepped out. Blinking the lamplight from her eyes, she peered up toward the outbuildings, and saw the gable end of the barn standing like a red arrow in the dark, and the top of a butternut tree beyond it drawn in skeleton traceries, and just then a cock crowed.

She went to the right corner of the house and saw where the light came from, ruddy above the woods down the valley. Returning into the house, she bent close to her mother's ear and shouted, "Somethin's a-fire down to the town, looks like," then went out again and up to the barn. "Soh! Soh!" she called to the animals. She climbed up and stood on the top rail of the cow-pen fence, only to find she could not locate the flame even there.

Ten rods behind the buildings a mass of rock mounted higher than their ridgepoles, a chopped-off buttress of the back ridge, covered with oak scrub and wild grapes and blackberries, whose thorny ropes the girl beat away from her skirt with the broom-handle as she scrambled up in the wine-colored dark. Once at the top, and the brush held aside, she could see the tongue-tip of the conflagration half a mile away at the town. And she knew by the bearing of the two church steeples that it was the building where the lock-up was that was burning.

There is a horror in knowing animals trapped in a fire, no matter what the animals.

"Oh, my God!" Mare said.

A car went down the road. Then there was a horse galloping. That would be Older Haskins probably. People were out at Ruby's father's farm; she could hear their voices raised. There must have been another car up from the other way, for lights wheeled and shouts were exchanged in the neighborhood of the bridge. Next thing she knew, Ruby was at the house below, looking for her probably.

He was telling her mother. Mrs. Doggett was not used to him, so he had to shout even louder than Mare had to.

"What y' reckon he done, the hellion! he broke the door and killed Lew Fyke and set the courthouse afire! . . . Where's Mare?"

Her mother would not know. Mare called. "Here, up the rock here."

She had better go down. Ruby would likely break his bones if he tried to climb the rock in the dark, not knowing the way. But the sight of the fire fascinated her simple spirit, the fearful element, more fearful than ever now, with the news. "Yes, I'm comin'," she called sulkily, hearing feet in the brush. "You wait; I'm comin'."

When she turned and saw it was Humble Jewett, right behind her among the branches, she opened her mouth to screech. She was not quick enough. Before a sound came out he got one hand over her face and the other arm around her body.

Mare had always thought she was strong, and the loony looked gangling, yet she was so easy for him that he need not hurt her. He made no haste and little noise as he carried her deeper into the undergrowth. Where the hill began to mount it was harder though. Presently he set her on her feet. He let the hand that had been over her mouth slip down to her throat, where the broad-tipped fingers wound, tender as yearning, weightless as caress.

"I was afraid you'd scream before you knew who 'twas, Amarantha. But I didn't want to hurt your lips, dear heart, your lovely, quiet lips."

It was so dark under the trees she could hardly see him, but she felt his breath on her mouth, near to. But then, instead of kissing her, he said, "No! No!" took from her throat an instant the hand that had held her mouth, kissed its palm, and put it back softly against her skin.

She stood stock still. Her mother's voice was to be heard in the distance, strident and meaningless. More cars were on the road. Nearer, around the rock, there were sounds of tramping and thrashing. Ruby fussed and cursed. He shouted, "Mare, dang you, where are you, Mare?" his voice harsh with uneasy anger. Now, if she aimed to do anything, was the time to do it. But there was neither breath nor power in her windpipe. It was as if those yearning fingers had paralyzed the muscles.

"Come!" The arm he put around her shivered against her shoulder blades. It was anger. "I hate killing. It's a dirty, ugly thing. It makes me sick." He gagged, judging by the sound. But then he ground his teeth. "Come away, my love!"

She found herself moving. Once when she broke a branch



knees and pulled her by an arm. "We can go now."

They went back down the slope, but at an angle, so that when they came to the level they passed two hundred yards to the north of the house, and crossed the road there. More and more, her walking was like sleepwalking, the feet numb in their shoes. Even where he had to let go of her, crossing the creek on stones, she stepped where he stepped with an obtuse docility. The voices of the searchers on the back ridge were small in distance when they began to climb the face of Coward Hill, on the opposite side of the valley.

There is an old farm on top of Coward Hill, big hay-fields as flat as tables. It had been half-past nine when Mare stood on the rock above the barn; it was toward midnight when Humble Jewett put aside the last branches of the woods and led her out on the height, and half a moon had risen. And a wind blew there, tossing the withered tops of last year's grasses, and mists ran with the wind, and ragged shadows with the mists, and mares'-tails of clear moonlight among the shadows, so that now the boles of birches on the forest's edge beyond the fences were but opal blurs and now cut alabaster. It struck so cold against the girl's cold flesh, this wind, that another wind of shivers blew through her, and she put her hands over her face and eyes. But the madman stood with his eyes wide open and his mouth open, drinking the moonlight and the wet wind.

His voice, when he spoke at last, was thick in his throat.

"Get down on your knees." He got down on his and pulled her after. "And pray!"

Once in England a poet sang four lines. Four hundred years have forgotten his name, but they have remembered his lines. The daft man knelt upright, his face raised to the wild scud, his long wrists hanging to the dead grass. He began simply:

*"O western wind, when wilt thou blow  
That the small rain down can rain?"*

The Adam's-apple was big in his bent throat. As simply he finished,

*"Christ, that my love were in my arms  
And I in my bed again!"*



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between his fingers. Mare was afraid it would break the spell then, and he would stop looking away and look at the house again. So she did something almost incredible; she spoke.

"It's a pretty—I mean a beautiful view down that-away."

"God Almighty beautiful, to take your breath away. I knew I'd never loved, Belovéd—" He caught a foot under the long end of one of the boards that covered the well and went down heavily on his hand and knees. It seemed to make no difference. "But I never knew I'd never lived," he finished in the same tone of strong rapture, quadruped in the grass, while Mare ran for the door and grabbed the latch.

When the latch would not give, she lost what little sense she had. She pounded with her fists. She cried with all her might: "Oh—hey—in there—hey—in there!" Then Jewett came and took her gently between his hands and drew her away, and then, though she was free, she stood in something like an awful embarrassment while he tried shouting.

"Hey! Friend! whoever you are, wake up and let my love and me come in!"

"No!" wailed the girl.

He grew peremptory. "Hey, wake up!" He tried the latch. He passed to full fury in a wink's time; he cursed, he kicked, he beat the door till Mare thought he would break his hands. Withdrawing, he ran at it with his shoulder; it burst at the latch, went slamming in, and left a black emptiness. His anger dissolved in a big laugh. Turning in time to catch her by a wrist, he cried joyously, "Come, my Sweet One!"

"No! No! Please—aw—listen. There ain't nobody there. He ain't to home. It wouldn't be right to go in anybody's house if they wasn't to home, you know that."

His laugh was blither than ever. He caught her high in his arms.

"I'd do the same by his love and him if 'twas my house, I would." At the threshold he paused and thought, "That is, if she was the true love of his heart forever."

The room was the parlor. Moonlight slanted in at the door, and another shaft came through a window and fell across a sofa, its covering dilapidated, showing its wadding



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*daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*

*Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor; thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies. Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.’”*

Mare had not been to church since she was a little girl, when her mother's black dress wore out. “No, no!” she wailed under her breath. “You're awful to say such awful things.” She might have shouted it; nothing could have shaken the man now, rapt in the immortal, passionate periods of Solomon's song.

“‘... now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples.’”

Hotness touched Mare's face for the first time. “Aw no, don't talk so!”

“‘And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved . . . causing the lips of them that are asleep to speak.’”

He had ended. His expression changed. Ecstasy gave place to anger, love to hate. And Mare felt the change in the weight of the fingers in her hair.

“What do you mean, I mustn't say it like that?” But it was not to her his fury spoke for he answered himself straightaway. “Like poetry, Mr. Jewett; I won't have blasphemy around my school.”

“Poetry! My God! if that isn't poetry—if that isn't music —” . . . “It's Bible, Jewett. What you're paid to teach here is literature.”

“Doctor Ryeworth, you're the blasphemer and you're an ignorant man.” . . . “And your Principal. And I won't have you going around reading sacred allegory like earthly love.”

“Ryeworth, you're an old man, a dull man, a dirty man, and you'd be better dead.”

Jewett's hand had slid down from Mare's head. “Then I went to put my fingers around his throat, so. But my stomach turned, and I didn't do it. I went to my room. I laughed all the way to my room. I sat in my room at my table and I laughed. I laughed all afternoon and long after-

dark came. And then, about ten, somebody came and stood beside me in my room.

"Wherefore dost thou laugh, son?"

"Then I knew who He was, He was Christ.

"I was laughing about that dirty, ignorant, crazy old fool, Lord."

"Wherefore dost thou laugh?"

"I didn't laugh any more. He didn't say any more. I kneeled down, bowed my head.

"Thy will be done! Where is he, Lord?"

"Over at the girls' dormitory, waiting for Blossom Sinckley."

"Brassy Blossom, dirty Blossom . . ."

It had come so suddenly it was nearly too late. Mare tore at his hands with hers, tried with all her strength to pull her neck away.

"Filthy Blossom! and him an old filthy man, Blossom! and you'll find him in Hell when you reach there, Blossom . . ."

It was more the nearness of his face than the hurt of his hands that gave her power of fright to choke out three words.

*"I—ain't—Blossom!"*

Light ran in crooked veins. Through the veins she saw his face bewildered. His hands loosened. One fell down and hung; the other he lifted and put over his eyes, took away again and looked at her.

"Amarantha!" His remorse was fearful to see. "What have I done!" His hands returned to hover over the hurts, ravening with pity, grief and tenderness. Tears fell down his cheeks. And with that, dammed desire broke its dam.

"Amarantha, my love, my dove, my beautiful love—"

"*And I ain't Amarantha neither, I'm Mary! Mary, that's my name!*"

She had no notion what she had done. He was like a crystal crucible that a chemist watches, changing hue in a wink with one adeptly added drop; but hers was not the chemist's eye. All she knew was that she felt light and free of him; all she could see of his face as he stood away above the moonlight were the whites of his eyes.

"Mary!" he muttered. A slight paroxysm shook his frame. So in the transparent crucible desire changed its

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He retreated farther, stood in the dark by some tall piece of furniture. And still she could see the whites of his eyes.

"Mary! Mary Adorable!" A wonder was in him. "Mother of God!"

Mare held her breath. She eyed the door, but it was too far. And already he came back to go on his knees before her, his shoulders so bowed and his face so lifted that it must have cracked his neck, she thought; all she could see on the face was pain.

"Mary Mother, I'm sick to my death. I'm so tired."

She had seen a dog like that, one she had loosened from a trap after it had been there three days, its caught leg half gnawed free. Something about the eyes.

"Mary Mother, take me in your arms . . ."

Once again her muscles tightened. But he made no move.

". . . and give me sleep."

No, they were worse than the dog's eyes.

"Sleep, sleep! why won't they let me sleep? Haven't I done it all yet, Mother? Haven't I washed them yet of all their sins? I've drunk the cup that was given me; is there another? They've mocked me and reviled me, broken my brow with thorns and my hands with nails, and I've forgiven them, for they knew not what they did. Can't I go to sleep now, Mother?"

Mare could not have said why, but now she was more frightened than she had ever been. Her hands lay heavy on her knees, side by side, and she could not take them away when he bowed his head and rested his face upon them.

After a moment he said one thing more. "Take me down gently when you take me from the Tree."

Gradually the weight of his body came against her shins, and he slept.

The moon streak that entered by the eastern window crept north across the floor, thinner and thinner; the one that fell through the southern doorway traveled east and grew fat. For a while Mare's feet pained her terribly and her legs too. She dared not move them, though, and by and by they did not hurt so much.

A dozen times, moving her head slowly on her neck, she canvassed the shadows of the room for a weapon. Each

time her eyes came back to a heavy earthenware pitcher on a stand some feet to the left of the sofa. It would have had flowers in it when Wyker's wife was alive; probably it had not been moved from its dust-ring since she died. It would be a long grab, perhaps too long; still, it might be done if she had her hands.

To get her hands from under the sleeper's head was the task she set herself. She pulled first one, then the other, infinitesimally. She waited. Again she tugged a very, very little. The order of his breathing was not disturbed. But at the third trial he stirred.

"Gently! gently!" His own muttering waked him more. With some drowsy instinct of possession he threw one hand across her wrists, pinning them together between thumb and fingers. She kept dead quiet, shut her eyes, lengthened her breathing, as if she too slept.

There came a time when what was pretense grew to be a peril; strange as it was, she had to fight to keep her eyes open. She never knew whether or not she really napped. But something changed in the air, and she was wide awake again. The moonlight was fading on the doorsill, and the light that runs before dawn waxed in the window behind her head.

And then she heard a voice in the distance, lifted in maunding song. It was old man Wyker coming home after a night, and it was plain he had had some whisky.

Now a new terror laid hold of Mare.

"Shut up, you fool you!" she wanted to shout. "Come quiet, quiet!" She might have chanced it now to throw the sleeper away from her and scramble and run, had his powers of strength and quickness not taken her simple imagination utterly in thrall.

Happily the singing stopped. What had occurred was that the farmer has espied the open door and, even befuddled as he was, wanted to know more about it quietly. He was so quiet that Mare began to fear he had gone away. He had the squirrel-hunter's foot, and the first she knew of him was when she looked and saw his head in the doorway, his hard, soiled, whiskery face half-up-side-down with craning.

He had been to the town. Between drinks he had wandered in and out of the night's excitement; had even

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a short distance with one search party himself. Now he took in the situation in the room. He used his forefinger. First he held it to his lips. Next he pointed it with a jabbing motion at the sleeper. Then he tapped his own forehead and described wheels. Lastly, with his whole hand, he made pushing gestures, for Mare to wait. Then he vanished as silently as he had appeared.

The minutes dragged. The light in the east strengthened and turned rosy. Once she thought she heard a board creaking in another part of the house, and looked down sharply to see if the loony stirred. All she could see of his face was a temple with freckles on it and the sharp ridge of a cheekbone, but even from so little she knew how deeply and peacefully he slept. The door darkened. Wyker was there again. In one hand he carried something heavy; with the other he beckoned.

"Come jumpin'?" he said out loud.

Mare went jumping, but her cramped legs threw her down half way to the sill; the rest of the distance she rolled and crawled. Just as she tumbled through the door it seemed as if the world had come to an end above her; two barrels of a shotgun discharged into a room make a noise. Afterwards all she could hear in there was something twisting and bumping on the floor-boards. She got up and ran.

Mare's mother had gone to pieces; neighbor women put her to bed when Mare came home. They wanted to put Mare to bed, but she would not let them. She sat on the edge of her bed in her lean-to bedroom off the kitchen, just as she was, her hair down all over her shoulders and her shoes on, and stared away from them, at a place in the wallpaper.

"Yeh, I'll go myself. Lea' me be!"

The women exchanged quick glances, thinned their lips, and left her be. "God knows," was all they would answer to the questionings of those that had not gone in, "but she's gettin' herself to bed."

When the doctor came though he found her sitting just as she had been, still dressed, her hair down on her shoulders and her shoes on.

"What d' y' want?" she muttered and stared at the place in the wallpaper.

How could Doc Paradise say, when he did not know himself?

"I didn't know if you might be—might be feeling very smart, Mary."

"I'm all right. Lea' me be."

It was a heavy responsibility. Doc shouldered it. "No, it's all right," he said to the men in the road. Ruby Herter stood a little apart, chewing sullenly and looking another way. Doc raised his voice to make certain it carried. "Nope, nothing."

Ruby's ears got red, and he clamped his jaws. He knew he ought to go in and see Mare, but he was not going to do it while everybody hung around waiting to see if he would. A mule tied near him reached out and mouthed his sleeve in idle innocence; he wheeled and banked a fist against the side of the animal's head.

"Well, what d' y' aim to do 'bout it?" he challenged its owner.

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heightens each sensuous recollection, like a hard, clear lacquer laid on wood, bringing out the color and grain of it vividly.

Last night Mare had lain stupid with fear on groundpine beneath a bush, loud foot-falls and light whispers confused in her ear. Only now, in her room, did she smell the groundpine.

Only now did the conscious part of her brain begin to make words of the whispering.

"*Amarantha*," she remembered, "*Amarantha sweet and fair*." That was as far as she could go for the moment, except that the rhyme with "fair" was "hair." But then a puzzle, held in abeyance, brought other words. She wondered what "ravel Ed" could mean. "*Most excellently ravelléd*." It was left to her mother to bring the end.

They gave up trying to keep her mother out at last. The poor woman's prostration took the form of fussiness.

"Good gracious, daughter, you look a sight. Them new shoes, half ruined; ain't your feet *dead*? And look at your hair, all tangled like a wild one!"

She got a comb.

"Be quiet, daughter; what's ailin' you. Don't shake your head!"

"*But shake your head and scatter day!*'"

"What you say, *Amarantha*?" Mrs. Doggett held an ear down.

"Go 'way! Lea' me be!"

Her mother was hurt and left. And Mare ran, as she stared at the wallpaper.

"*Christ, that my love were in my arms . . .*"

Mare ran. She ran through a wind white with moonlight and wet with "the small rain." And the wind she ran through, it ran through her, and made her shiver as she ran. And the man beside her leaped high over the waves of the dead grasses and gathered the wind in his arms, and her hair was heavy and his was tossing, and a little fox ran before them across the top of the world. And the world spread down around in waves of black and silver, more immense than she had ever known the world could be, and more beautiful.

"*God Almighty beautiful, to take your breath away!*"

Mare wondered, and she was not used to wondering. "Is

it only crazy folks ever run like that and talk that way?"

She no longer ran; she walked; for her breath was gone. And there was some other reason; some other reason. Oh, yes, it was because her feet were hurting her. So, at last, and roundabout, her shoes had made contact with her brain.

Bending over the side of the bed, she loosened one of them mechanically. She pulled it half off. But then she looked down at it sharply, and she pulled it on again.

"How beautiful . . ."

Color overspread her face in a slow wave.

"How beautiful are thy feet with shoes . . ."

"Is it only crazy folks ever say such things?"

"O prince's daughter!"

"Or call you that?"

By and by there was a knock at the door. It opened, and Ruby Herter came in.

"Hello, Mare old girl!" His face was red. He scowled and kicked at the floor. "I'd 'a' been over sooner, except we got a mule down sick." He looked at his dumb betrothed. "Come on, cheer up, forget it! He won't scare you no more, not that boy, not what's left o' him. What you lookin' at, sourface? Ain't you glad to see me?"

Mare quit looking at the wallpaper and looked at the floor.

"Yeh," she said.

"That's more like it, babe." He came and sat beside her; reached down behind her and gave her a spank. "Come on, give us a kiss, babe!" He wiped his mouth on his jumper sleeve, a good farmer's sleeve, spotted with milking. He put his hands on her; he was used to handling animals. "Hey, you, warm up a little, reckon I'm goin' to do all the lovin'?"

"Ruby, lea' me be!"

"What!"

She was up, twisting. He was up, purple.

"What's ailin' you, Mare? What you bawlin' about?"

"Nothin'—only go 'way!"

She pushed him to the door and through it with all her strength, and closed it in his face, and stood with her weight against it, crying, "Go 'way! Go 'way! Lea' me be!"

# THE STORY OF A FARM GIRL

*by Guy de Maupassant*

*Maupassant could speak a full-length book in twenty-odd pages. This brief story of the girl Rose, her fatherless child, her demanding husband, suggests as much about the basic passions as many a lengthy novel; it is simply a matter of not wasting words—and of genius.*

As the weather was very fine, the people on the farm had dined more quickly than usual, and had returned to the fields.

The female servant, Rose, remained alone in the large kitchen, where the fire on the hearth was dying out, under the large boiler of hot water. From time to time she took some water out of it, and slowly washed her plates and dishes, stopping occasionally to look at the two streaks of light which the sun threw on to the long table through the window, and which showed the defects in the glass.

Three venturesome hens were picking up the crumbs under the chairs, while the smell of the poultry yard and the warmth from the cow-stall came in through the half open door, and a cock was heard crowing in the distance.

When she had finished her work, wiped down the table, dusted the mantelpiece, and put the plates on to the high dresser, close to the wooden clock, with its enormous pendulum, she drew a long breath, as she felt rather oppressed, without exactly knowing why. She looked at the



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which the blue and yellow iris flowers with their sword-like leaves grew, smoked as if the moisture of the stables and barns was coming through the straw.

The girl went to the shed where the carts and traps were kept. Close to it, in a ditch, there was a large patch of violets whose scent was perceptible all round, while beyond it could be seen the open country where the corn was growing, with clumps of trees in the distance, and groups of laborers here and there, who looked as small as dolls, and white horses like toys, who were pulling a child's cart, driven by a man as tall as one's finger.

She took up a bundle of straw, threw it into the ditch and sat down upon it; then, not feeling comfortable, she undid it, spread it out and lay down upon it at full length, on her back, with both arms under her head, and her limbs stretched out.

Gradually her eyes closed, and she was falling into a state of delightful languor. She was, in fact, almost asleep, when she felt two hands on her bosom, and then she sprang up at a bound. It was Jacques, one of the farm laborers, a tall fellow from Picardy, who had been making love to her for a long time. He had been looking after the sheep,

and seeing her lying down in the shade, he had come stealthily, and holding his breath, with glistening eyes, and bits of straw in his hair.

He tried to kiss her, but she gave him a smack in the face, for she was as strong as he, and he was shrewd enough to beg her pardon: so they sat down side by side and talked amicably. They spoke about the favorable weather, of their master, who was a good fellow, then of their neighbors, of all the people in the country round, of themselves, of their village, of their youthful days, of their recollections, of their relatives, whom they had not seen for a long time, and might not see again. She grew sad, as she thought of it, while he, with one fixed idea in his head, rubbed against her with a kind of a shiver, overcome by desire.

"I have not seen my mother for a long time," she said. "It is very hard to be separated like that." And she directed her looks into the distance, toward the village in the north, which she had left.

Suddenly, however, he seized her by the neck and kissed her again. But she struck him so violently in the face with her clenched fist, that his nose began to bleed, and he got up and laid his head against the trunk of a tree. When she saw that, she was sorry, and going up to him, she said, "Have I hurt you?"

He, however, only laughed. "No, it was a mere nothing"; though she had hit him right on the middle of the nose. "What a devil!" he said, and he looked at her with admiration, for she had inspired him with a feeling of respect and of a very different kind of admiration, which was the beginning of real love for that tall, strong wench.

When the bleeding had stopped, he proposed a walk, as he was afraid of his neighbor's heavy hand, if they remained side by side like that much longer; but she took his arm of her own accord, in the avenue, as if they had been out for an evening walk, and said, "It is not nice of you to despise me like that, Jacques."

He protested, however. No, he did not despise her. He was in love with her, that was all.

"So you really want to marry me?" she asked.

He hesitated, and then looked at her, while she looked straight ahead of her. She had fat, red cheeks, a full protuberant bust under her muslin dress, thick, red lips, and her neck, which was almost bare, was covered with small beads of perspiration. He felt a fresh access of desire, and putting his lips to her ear, he murmured, "Yes, of course I do."

Then she threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him for such a long time, that both of them lost their breath. From that moment the eternal story of love began between them. They plagued one another in corners; they met in the moonlight under a haystack, and gave each other bruises on the legs, with their heavy nailed boots. By degrees, however, Jacques seemed to grow tired of her. He avoided her: scarcely spoke to her, and did not try any longer to meet alone, which made her sad and anxious, especially when she found that she was pregnant.

At first, she was in a state of consternation; then she

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She was angry, and her rage increased every day, because she could not meet him, as he avoided her most carefully. At last, one night when everyone in the farmhouse was asleep, she went out noiselessly in her petticoat, with bare feet, crossed the yard and opened the door of the stable where Jacques was lying in a large box of straw, over his horses. He pretended to snore when he heard her coming, but she knelt down by his side and shook him until he sat up.

"What do you want?" he then asked of her.

With clenched teeth, and trembling with anger she replied, "I want—I want you to marry me, as you promised."

But he only laughed, and replied, "Oh, if a man were to marry all the girls with whom he has made a slip, he would have more than enough to do."

Then she seized him by the throat, threw him on to his back, so that he could not disengage himself from her, and half strangling him, she shouted into his face, "I am *enceinte*, do you hear? I am *enceinte*!"

He gasped for breath, as he was nearly choked, and so they remained, both of them, motionless and without speaking, in the dark silence, which was only broken by the noise that a horse made as he pulled the hay out of the manger, and then slowly chewed it.

When Jacques found that she was the stronger, he stammered, "Very well, I will marry you, as that is the case."

But she did not believe his promises. "It must be at once," she said. "You must have the banns put up."

"At once," he replied.

"Swear solemnly that you will."

He hesitated for a few moments, and then said, "I swear it, by heaven."

Then she released her grasp, and went away without another word.

She had no chance of speaking to him for several days, and since the stable was now always locked at night, she was afraid to make any noise, for fear of creating a scandal. One day, however, she saw another man come in at dinner-time, and so she said, "Has Jacques left?"

"Yes," the man replied. "I have taken his place."

This made her tremble so violently that she could not take the saucepan off the fire; and later when they were all at work, she went up into her room and cried, burying her head in her bolster, so that she might not be heard. During the day, however, she tried to obtain some information without exciting any suspicions, but she was so overwhelmed by the thoughts of her misfortune that she fancied that all the people whom she asked laughed maliciously. All she learned, however, was that he had left the neighborhood altogether.

Then a cloud of constant misery began for her. She worked mechanically, without thinking of what she was doing, with one fixed idea in her head, suppose people were to know.

This continual feeling made her so incapable of reasoning, that she did not even try to think of any means of avoiding the disgrace that she knew must ensue, which was irreparable, and drawing nearer every day, and which was as sure as death itself. She got up every morning long before the others, and tried to look at her figure in a piece of broken looking-glass at which she did her hair. She was very anxious to know whether anybody would notice a change in her, and during the day she stopped working every few minutes to look at herself from top to toe, to see whether the size of her abdomen did not make her apron look too short.

The months went on. She scarcely spoke now. When she was asked a question she did not appear to understand. She had a frightened look, with haggard eyes and trembling hands, which made her master say to her occasionally, "My poor girl, how stupid you have grown lately."

In church, she hid behind a pillar, and no longer ventured to go to confession. She feared to face the priest, to whom she attributed a superhuman power which enabled him to read people's consciences. At meal times, the looks of her fellow-servants almost made her faint with mental agony. She was always fancying that she had been found out by the cowherd, a precocious and cunning little lad, whose bright eyes seemed always to be watching her.

One morning the postman brought her a letter, and as

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She had never received one in her life before, she was so upset by it, that she was obliged to sit down. Perhaps it was from him? But as she could not read; she sat anxious and trembling with that piece of paper covered with ink in her hand. After a time, however, she put it into her pocket, as she did not venture to confide her secret to anyone. She often stopped in her work to look at the lines, written at regular intervals, and terminating in a signature, imagining vaguely that she would suddenly discover their meaning. At last, as she felt half mad with impatience and anxiety, she went to the schoolmaster, who told her to sit down, and read the letter to her.

My Dear Daughter,

I write to tell you that I am very ill. Our neighbor, Monsieur Dentu, begs you to come, if you can.

For your affectionate mother,

CESAIRE DENTU

Deputy Mayor

She did not say a word, and went away, but as soon as she was alone, her legs gave way, and she fell down by the roadside, and remained there till night.

When she got back, she told the farmer her trouble. He allowed her to go home, for as long as she wanted, promised to have her work done by a charwoman, and to take her back when she returned.

Her mother died soon after she got there, and the next day Rose gave birth to a seven months' child, a miserable little skeleton, thin enough to make anybody shudder. It seemed to be suffering continually, to judge from the painful manner in which it moved its poor little limbs, which were as thin as a crab's legs, but it lived, for all that. She said that she was married, but that she could not saddle herself with the child, so she left it with some neighbors, who promised to take great care of it, and she went back to the farm.

But then, in her heart, which had been wounded so long, there arose something like brightness, an unknown love for that frail little creature which she had left behind her, but there was fresh suffering in that very love, suffering which

she felt every hour and every minute, because she was parted from the child. What pained her most, however, was a mad longing to kiss it, to press it in her arms, to feel the warmth of its little body against her skin. She could not sleep at night; she thought of it the whole day long, and in the evening, when her work was done, she used to sit in front of the fire and look at it intently, as people do whose thoughts are far away.

They began to talk about her, and to tease her about her lover. They asked her whether he was tall, handsome and rich. When was the wedding to be, and the christening? And often she ran away to cry by herself, for these questions seemed to hurt her, like the prick of a pin, and in order to forget their jokes, she began to work still more energetically, and still thinking of her child, she sought for the means of saving up money for it, and determined to work so that her master would be obliged to raise her wages.

Then, by degrees, she almost monopolized the work, and persuaded him to get rid of one servant girl, who had become useless since she had taken to working like two. She economized on the bread, oil, and candles, on the corn which they gave to the fowls too extravagantly, and on the fodder for the horses and cattle, which was rather wasted. She was as miserly about her master's money as if it had been her own, and by dint of making good bargains, of getting high prices for all their produce, and by baffling the peasants' tricks when they offered anything for sale, he at last intrusted her with buying and selling everything, with the direction of all the laborers, and with the quantity of provisions necessary for the household, so that in a short time she became indispensable to him. She kept such a strict eye on everything about her, that under her direction the farm prospered wonderfully, and for five miles round the people talked of "Master Vallin's servant," and the farmer himself said everywhere, "That girl is worth more than her weight in gold."

But time passed by, and her wages remained the same. Her hard work was accepted as something that was due from every good servant, and as a mere token of her good will. She began to think rather bitterly, that if the ~~farm~~

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could put fifty or a hundred crowns extra into the bank every month, thanks to her, she was still only earning her two hundred francs a year, neither more nor less, and so she made up her mind to ask for an increase of wages. She went to see the schoolmaster three times about it, but when she got there, she spoke of something else. She felt a kind of modesty in asking for money, as if it were something disgraceful. But at last, one day, when the farmer was having breakfast by himself in the kitchen, she said to him, with some embarrassment, that she wished to speak to him particularly. He raised his head in surprise, with both his hands on the table, holding his knife, with its point in the air, in one, and a piece of bread in the other. He looked fixedly at the girl, who felt uncomfortable under his gaze, but asked for a week's holiday, so that she might get away, as she was not very well.

He acceded to her request immediately, and then added, in some embarrassment, himself, "When you come back, I shall have something to say to you, myself."

The child was nearly eight months old, and she hardly recognized it. It had grown rosy and chubby all over like a little bundle of living fat. She threw herself on to it as if it had been some prey, and kissed it so violently that it began to scream with terror, and then she began to cry herself, because it did not know her, and stretched out its arms to its nurse, as soon as it saw her. But the next day, it began to get used to her, and laughed when it saw her, and she took it into the fields and ran about excitedly with it, and sat down under the shade of the trees, and then, for the first time in her life, she opened her heart to somebody, and told the infant her troubles, how hard her work was, her anxieties and her hopes, and she quite tired the child with the violence of her caresses.

She took the greatest pleasure in handling it, in washing and dressing it, for it seemed to her that all this was the confirmation of her maternity, and she would look at it, almost feeling surprised that it was hers, and she used to say to herself in a low voice, as she danced it in her arms, "It is my baby, it is my baby."

She cried all the way home as she returned to the farm,

and had scarcely got in, before her master called her into his room. She went in, feeling astonished and nervous, without knowing why.

"Sit down there," he said.

She sat down, and for some moments they remained side by side, in some embarrassment, with their arms hanging at their sides, as if they did not know what to do with them, and looking each other in the face, after the manner of peasants.

The farmer, a stout, jovial, obstinate man of forty-five, who had lost two wives, evidently felt embarrassed, which was very unusual with him. But at last he made up his mind, and began to speak vaguely, hesitating a little, and looking out of the window as he talked.

"How is it, Rose," he said, "that you have never thought of settling in life?"

She grew as pale as death, and seeing that she gave him no answer, he went on, "You are a good, steady, active and economical girl, and a wife like you would make a man's fortune."

She did not move, but looked frightened; she did not even try to comprehend his meaning, for her thoughts were in a whirl, as if at the approach of some great danger.

After waiting for a few seconds, he went on, "You see, a farm without a mistress can never succeed, even with a servant like you."

Then he stopped, for he did not know what else to say, and Rose looked at him with the air of a person who thinks that he is face to face with a murderer, and ready to flee at the slightest movement he may make.

After waiting for about five minutes, he asked her, "Well, will it suit you?"

"Will what suit me, master?"

And he said, quickly, "Why, to marry me. by Jesus!"

She jumped up, but fell back on to her chair as if she had been struck, and there she remained motionless like a person who is overwhelmed by some great misfortune. But at last the farmer grew impatient, and said, "Come, what more do you want?"

She looked at him almost in tears, ~~the moment~~

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came into her eyes, and she said twice, in a choking voice, "I cannot, I cannot!"

"Why not?" he asked. "Come, don't be silly; I will give you until tomorrow to think it over."

And he hurried out of the room, very glad to have finished a matter which had troubled him a good deal. He had no doubt that she would the next morning accept a proposal which she could never have expected, and which would be a capital bargain for him, as he thus bound a woman to himself who would certainly bring him more than if she had the best dowry in the district.

Neither could there be any scruples about an unequal match between them, for in the country everyone is very nearly equal. The farmer works just like his laborers; the latter frequently become masters in their turn, and the female servants constantly become the mistresses of the establishment, without making any change in their life or habits.

Rose did not go to bed that night. She threw herself, dressed as she was, onto her bed, and she had not even strength to cry left in her, she was so thoroughly astonished. She remained quite inert, scarcely knowing that she had a body, and without being at all able to collect her thoughts, though at moments she remembered a part of that which had happened, and then she was frightened at the idea of what might happen. Her terror increased, and every time the great kitchen clock struck the hour, she broke into perspiration from grief. She lost her head, and had a nightmare; her candle went out, and then she began to imagine that someone had thrown a spell over her, as country people so often fancy, and she felt a mad inclination to run away, to escape and flee before her misfortune, as a ship scuds before the wind.

An owl hooted, and she shivered, sat up, put her hands to her face, into her hair, and all over her body, and then she went downstairs, as if she were walking in her sleep. When she got into the yard, she stooped down, so as not to be seen by any prowling scamp, for the moon, which was setting, shed a bright light on the fields. Instead of opening the gate, she scrambled over the fence, and as soon as she was outside, she started off. She went on straight before

her, with a quick, elastic trot, and from time to time, she unconsciously uttered a piercing cry. Her long shadow accompanied her, and now and then some night bird flew over her head, while the dogs in the farmyards barked, as they heard her pass. One even jumped over the ditch, followed her, and tried to bite her, but she turned round at it, and gave such a terrible yell that the frightened animal ran back, and cowered in silence in its kennel.

The stars grew dim, and the birds began to twitter; day was breaking. The girl was worn out and panting, and when the sun rose in the purple sky, she stopped, for her swollen feet refused to go any further. But she saw a pond in the distance, a large pond whose stagnant water looked like blood under the reflection of this new day, and she limped on with short steps and with her hand on her heart, in order to dip both her feet in it.

She sat down on a tuft of grass, took off her sabots which were full of dust, pulled off her stockings and plunged her legs into the still water, from which bubbles were rising here and there.

A feeling of delicious coolness pervaded her from head to foot, and suddenly, while she was looking fixedly at the deep pool, she was seized with giddiness, and with a mad longing to throw herself into it. All her sufferings would be over in there; over forever. She no longer thought of her child; she only wanted peace, complete rest, and to sleep forever, and she got up with raised arms and took two steps forward. She was in the water up to her thighs, and she was just about to throw herself in, when sharp, pricking pains in her ankles made her jump back. She uttered a cry of despair, for, from her knees to the tips of her feet, long, black leeches were sucking in her life blood, and were swelling, as they adhered to her flesh. She did not dare to touch them, and screamed with horror, so that her cries of despair attracted a peasant, who was driving along at some distance, to the spot. He pulled off the leeches, one by one, applied herbs to the wounds, and drove the girl to her master's farm, in his gig.

She was in bed for a fortnight, and as she was sitting outside the door on the first morning that she got up, the farmer suddenly came and planted himself before her.

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"Well, he said, "I suppose the affair is settled, isn't it?"

She did not reply at first, and then, as he remained standing and looking at her intently with his piercing eyes, she spoke with difficulty. "No, master, I cannot."

But he immediately flew into a rage. "You cannot, girl; you cannot? I should just like to know the reason why?"

She began to cry, and repeated, "I cannot."

He looked at her, and then exclaimed, angrily, "Then I suppose you have a lover?"

"Perhaps that is it," she replied, trembling with shame.

The man got as red as a poppy, and stammered in a rage, "Ah, So you confess it, you slut! And pray who is the fellow? Some penniless, half-starved ragamuffin, without a roof to his head, I suppose? Who is it, I say?"

And as she gave him no answer, he continued, "Ah! So you will not tell me. Then I will tell you; it is Jean Baudal!"

"No, not he," she exclaimed.

"Then it is Pierre Martin?"

"Oh! no, master."

And he angrily mentioned all the young fellows in the neighborhood, while she denied that he had hit upon the right one, and every moment wiped her eyes with the corner of her blue apron. But he still tried to find out, with his brutish obstinacy, and, as it were, scratched her heart to discover her secret, as a terrier scratches at a hole to try and get at the animal which he scents in it.

Suddenly, however, the man shouted, "By George! It is Jacques, the man who was here last year. They used to say that you were always talking together, and that you thought about getting married."

Rose was choking, and she grew scarlet, while her tears suddenly stopped, and dried up on her cheeks, like drops of water on hot iron, and she exclaimed, "No, it is not he, it is not he!"

"Is that really a fact?" asked the cunning farmer, who partly guessed the truth, and she replied hastily, "I will swear it; I will swear it to you." She tried to think of something by which to swear, as she did not dare to invoke sacred things.

But he interrupted her, "At any rate, he used to follow you into every corner, and devoured you with his eyes at meal times. Did you ever give him your promise, eh?"



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She married him. She felt as if she were in a pit with inaccessible edges, from which she could never get out, and all kinds of misfortunes remained hanging over her head, like huge rocks, which would fall on the first occasion. Her husband gave her the impression of a man whom she had stolen, and who would find it out some day or other. And then she thought of her child, who was the cause of her misfortunes, but was also the cause of all her happiness on earth. She went to see him twice a year, and she came back more unhappy each time.

But she gradually grew accustomed to her life; her fears were allayed, her heart was at rest, and she lived with an easier mind, although still with some vague fear floating in her mind. So years went on, and the child was six. She was almost happy now, when suddenly the farmer's temper grew very bad.

For two or three years, he seemed to have been nursing some secret anxiety, to be troubled by some care, some mental disturbance, which was gradually increasing. He remained at the table a long time after dinner, with his head in his hands, sad and devoured by sorrow. He always spoke hastily, sometimes even brutally, and it even seemed as if he bore a grudge against his wife, for at times he answered her roughly, almost angrily.

One day, when a neighbor's boy came for some eggs, and she spoke rather crossly to him, for she was very busy, her husband suddenly came in, and said to her in his unpleasant voice, "If that were your own child, you would not treat him so."

She was hurt and did not reply, and then she went back into the house with all her grief awakened fresh.

At dinner, the farmer neither spoke to her nor looked at her, and seemed to hate her, to despise her, to know something about the affair at last. In consequence, she lost her head and did not venture to remain alone with him after the meal was over, but left the room and hastened to the church.

It was getting dusk; the narrow nave was in total darkness, but she heard footsteps in the choir, for the sacristan was preparing the tabernacle lamp for the night. That spot of trembling light, which was lost in the darkness of the



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"Perhaps there are some secret ways?" And they had to find out. They were told of a shepherd who lived ten leagues off, and so Vallin one day drove off to consult him. The shepherd gave him a loaf on which he had made some marks; it was kneaded up with herbs, and both of them were to eat a piece of it before and after their mutual caresses; but they ate the whole loaf without obtaining any results from it.

Next, a schoolmaster unveiled mysteries and processes of love which were unknown in the country, but infallible, so he declared; but none of them had the desired effect. Then the priest advised them to make a pilgrimage to the shrine at Fécamp. Rose went with the crowd and prostrated herself in the abbey, and mingling her prayers with the coarse wishes of the peasants around her, she prayed that she might be fruitful a second time; but it was in vain, and then she thought that she was being punished for her first fault, and she was seized by terrible grief. She was wasting away with sorrow; her husband was growing old prematurely, and was wearing himself out in useless hopes.

Then war broke out between them; he called her names and beat her. They quarreled all day long, and when they were in bed together at night he flung insults and obscenities at her, panting with rage, until one night, not being able to think of any means of making her suffer more, he ordered her to get up and go stand out of doors in the rain until daylight. As she did not obey him, he seized her by the neck, and began to strike her in the face with his fists, but she said nothing, and did not move. In his exasperation he knelt on her, and with clenched teeth and mad with rage began to beat her. Then in her despair she rebelled, and flinging him against the wall with a furious gesture, she sat up, and in an altered voice, she hissed, "I have had a child, I have had one! I had it by Jacques; you know Jacques well. He promised to marry me, but he left this neighborhood without keeping his word."

The man was thunderstruck, and could hardly speak, but at last he stammered, "What are you saying? What are you saying?"

Then she began to sob, and amid her tears she said, "That was the reason why I did not want to marry you. I could

not tell you, for you would have left me without any bread for my child. You have never had any children, so you cannot understand, you cannot understand!"

He said again, mechanically with increasing surprise, "You have a child? You have a child?"

"You won me by force, as I suppose you know. I did not want to marry you," she said, still sobbing.

Then he got up, lighted the candle, and began to walk up and down, with his arms behind him. She was cowering on the bed and crying, and suddenly he stopped in front of her and said, "Then it is my fault that you have no children?"

She gave him no answer, and he began to walk up and down again, and then, stopping again, he continued, "How old is your child?"

"Just six," she whispered.

"Why did you not tell me about it?" he asked.

"How could I?" she replied, with a sigh.

He remained standing, motionless. "Come, get up," he said.

She got up, with some difficulty, and then when she was standing on the floor, he suddenly began to laugh, with his hearty laugh of his good days, and seeing how surprised she was, he added: "Very well, we will go and fetch the child, since you and I can have none together."

She was so scared that if she had the strength she would assuredly have run away, but the farmer rubbed his hands and said, "I wanted to adopt one, and now we have found one. I asked the Curé about an orphan, some time ago."

Then, still laughing, he kissed his weeping and agitated wife on both cheeks, and shouted out, as if she could not hear him, "Come along, Mother, we will go and see whether there is any soup left; I should not mind a plateful."

She put on her petticoat, and they went downstairs; and while she was kneeling in front of the fireplace, and lighting the fire under the saucepan, he continued to walk up and down the kitchen with long strides, and said, "Well, I am really glad at this; I am not saying it for form's sake, but I am glad, I am really very glad."

## A CHANGE OF AIR

*by Ivan Gold*

*Excess—perhaps the most extreme excess possible—is only in part the theme of this story. But it is more than enough to have made Bobbie Bedner, its heroine, one of the most talked about young ladies in recent fiction.*

### *Prologue*

*Bobbie Bedner at the age of nineteen during the course of three warm August days and nights lost not her virginity which she had long before misplaced in the back of an automobile but the memory of it, and almost, along with this, the capacity to remember. What she knew when she awoke on the first of the August mornings was that on such a fine sunny morning one had to be completely out of one's head to go to work in a button factory what with a hundred better nicer cleaner things to do, and damn her mother and the button factory, she would go for a long walk out of doors or maybe to a movie. What she knew as well (but not as loudly) as her not going to work was exactly where she was going and why. But what she did not know . . . what she could not possibly know when she got on the bus (which passed one park and two movie*



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consumed a bottle of milk, two of beer, a number of pretzels and a ham sandwich, called her mother on the evening of the first day to assure her that everything was under control and (it was Friday) she was spending the night at a friend's house and did not know exactly when she would be home, and returned home two and one-half days later when one of the Werewolves, preparing to make the trip for the third time, suddenly and concernedly noticed how peaked she was. They put her on a bus at eight o'clock on Monday morning, thoughtfully providing her with carfare, warning her to keep it quiet which they did not have to do since she truly bore them no animosity, and she returned home, eleven pounds less of her, to her mother and to the police who had preceded her by only twenty minutes, and fainted in the doorway.

When she awoke, tight-lipped, in a hospital, heard the doctor proclaim to the police and nurse the girl has suffered an ordeal, been without food and raped many times, laughed her crazy laugh, and had to say you screwy sawbones you it wasn't rape and how many times and laughed the crazy laugh for many minutes at the doctor's guess of thirty the nurse's forty the police's fifty, told them how many times (having kept a careful count), told them laughing crazily it was all her own idea and she might have a go at it again, but worth less than nothing to the forces of law and order in the names and places department.

They sent her away. They had to. Her mother wrung her hands, cursed her God and the memory of her husband. They sent her away for two years. When she returned from Rehabilitation School she had regained the eleven pounds and five additional. There were other, apparently deeper changes.

*Franklin Cripple DeTorres*, carrying himself well at five foot-seven, absolutely sound of limb and body, derived his middle name, twenty-five cents, and a good part of his reputation as a result of an encounter in (and with) a subway. Always sure of himself, acutely conscious of his heritage—Puerto Rico (for his birth and the year afterward), New York and bravery—never more so than at five A.M. on a liquored Sunday morning, Cripple (Crip to his friends).



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ore his luck began to change), Cripple, when he saw her walk in, felt that the least he could do for the boys he had taken over was to get them to the slut as long as she happened to be around. He was the first on line, then, as the affair began to mushroom (something he did not foresee but which did not make any difference), thirty-first and again one hundred and sixth. He was sorry to hear (he did not hear, but deduced from her absence) that the girl had been sent to a reformatory.

When the Werewolves disbanded (after a police raid which led to the twelve Werewolves present at the club spending some time at headquarters, and the two of them identified by the badly battered grocery proprietor remaining after the others were allowed to leave) Cripple devoted himself to intellectual pursuits, spending most of his evenings at Gelber's Chess Club on Seventeenth Street. He went usually with Joe Muneco, or met him there. They were the only two young men (except for occasional visits from Joe's friends) in what was otherwise a storm center for the old. Together, these two, they either beat (they played well) or talked down every old man in the place.

A problem to Early Environmentalists (the key to personality lies in the first three or five or nine or eleven years), *Joseph Muneco* (of whom they had never heard) spent the first three years of his life running around the streets of San Juan, Puerto Rico, the next fourteen years escaping policemen (for playing stickball on New York City streets and mugging usually close-to-penniless passersby), then, being expelled from three high schools (for non-attendance of classes and smoking marijuana), finally happening across a novel by Thomas Wolfe, impressed enough to read this author's entire works, discovering James Joyce, and in his twentieth year, and his fourth high school, becoming the editor (and first prize winner in a national short story contest) of his high school literary magazine.

Made many friends in this high school (at home on all intellectual strata), fell in love with and was loved by the editor of the high school newspaper (a Jewish girl of orthodox parents who were destined to object to their

daughter's keeping company with a Gentile, and with a Spanish Gentile, and with one who looked so typically and unhealthily Spanish), went to a city college (his girl and he), saw the girl every day and on Saturday nights, and devoted the rest of his social time alternately to Cripple (alone or with mutual acquaintances, members of the long-defunct Werewolves) and to his other high school friends (the last high school), cream of the intellectual crop, the boys who read the books, who thought about writing them (as he did—although he only thought), and who by fairly frequent remarks pertaining to his dual heritage (the literate hoodlum, and variants, with lots of laughter, although he had for a long time now adhered to the straight and narrow path) contributed to the growth of his impassioned unusual campaign of self-justification.

Impassioned unusual campaign of self-justification . . . not with his girl Anne, with whom he was in love; nor with Cripple and with these friends with whom he fitted in so perfectly that there was no need of it; but with the others . . .

With *Phillip Zand*, literary critic until his junior year at college, thinking now of psychology, seeing it as a back door to the world he didn't live in; a great reader and a great listener to music, and a self-styled neurotic, finding himself replete with wrong things to say (to women), and not enough women to say them to; not pretty, but (not that this mattered) not as unpretty as he thought he was, weakly contemptuous of the others, his close circle of friends, in the only regions where he was qualified to be contemptuous, books and music, finding them in these regions, although reasonably well informed, nevertheless with sufficient (for the purposes of ridicule) misinformation . . .

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... circuit which Phil Zand—by no means accidentally—was forever hearing about, but still . . . ), a lecher at nineteen, being famed (and given no peace) for the most amazing collection of pornographic snapshots and literature perhaps ever assembled, delighting in lending certain parts of his collection to Phil since he knew what he used them for, a good but strange mind; a flair for chess, a match for Joe Muneco, a terrific and serious rivalry building between them, as a result of and a further prod to mutual dislike . . .

With *Benjamin Brock*, the only one of them attending a college which it required money to attend, assuming therefore a certain superiority in the quality of his education, never having to mention the felt superiority for them to know that it was there; doubting especially (again tacitly, or if not tacitly, then blatantly in jest) Muneco's claim to higher understanding (Joe having not written since the days of his high school triumphs—Ben writing all the time—two long years ago, unable to take his typewriter out of pawn, and besides, being busy—with his girl and with Cripple—being happy), Muneco feeling Ben's doubts, and the doubts of the others, knowing the realm of the intellect to be his as well as (if not more than) theirs, but feeling it always necessary to prove it to them, and so . . .

Joseph Muneco's impassioned unusual campaign of self-justification, the utilization of a phenomenal memory, an almost photographic memory, committing to it the equivalent of three large columns of verse, from Sappho to Cummings, and considerable prose, quoting some part of his repertoire at the least provocation, creating his own provocation, irrelevant (the quoting) to anything occurring or even said in his immediate environment, but illustrating to Phil and to Lee and to Ben and to anyone else around that he, Joseph Muneco, had a sizable portion of the world's literature at his fingertips, had the best that man's mind has yet created stored (with an understanding of it, if anyone pursued the matter) in his memory, that he, Joseph Muneco was, whatever else he might also be, an intellectual.

With this and these in mind, we can begin the story.

## *The Story*

Gelber's Chess Club was partly that. More, it was a place to play cards and a place to stay, on cold winter nights and dull summer ones. In the back of the club, away from the two windows overlooking Seventeenth Street, was a small room with a stove in which Mrs. Gelber made and sold coffee and sandwiches. The long, large room which was the club was divided by common consent into the sections for chess players and for card players; there were the few benches in the chess player section for those who wished to sleep, to think, or to read the paper. On the door of the club was a sign reading FOR MEMBERS ONLY and inside the club a sign said MEMBERSHIP DUES, ONE DOLLAR A YEAR. Neither of these mattered. Gelber was friendly, did not need the money, and owned the building. The signs were put up at the insistence of his wife and Gelber neither desired to, nor did he, reinforce them. The club had been on Seventeenth Street for twenty-two years, and although the faces changed, at intervals, the mean age of the members did not. The men at the club—and they were all men aside from Gelber's wife—averaged fifty-five years of age. If not for the presence of Joseph Muneco and Franklin De-Torres, who came often enough to necessitate their inclusion in any mathematical calculations, the average age of the members of Gelber's Chess Club would have been fifty-seven.

Frank DeTorres was talking to Joe Muneco.

"Okay Ace," he said. "Push the pawn. Before the place closes, Ace. I guarantee the safety of the pawn move."

Frank had arrived at 11 o'clock and had played chess with the old men. He won more than he lost and he enjoyed his conversation and the reactions to it. At one o'clock Joe Muneco walked in, earlier than usual for a Saturday night, but his girl had gotten sick and he took her home early, leaving her a block from where she lived in case one of her parents happened to be looking from the window. Meeting her on Saturday nights was no problem since she had a job ushering at concerts in a school auditorium in his neighborhood, and he could meet her afterward, at nine-

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anity. On this Saturday night she became ill and he took her home. When he got to the club, he and Frank DeTorre played chess. Muneco was the better of the two but agains each other they played carelessly, and games were not won or lost in accord with their ability.

At DeTorres' remark, Joe became angry for the three old men who made up his audience.

"Take it easy, Ace," he said. "Any time you want to play three seconds a move, you let me know, Ace. The pawn move is for the fushas. I give you this." He moved his bishop along its diagonal. One of the old men grunted approval and smiled a toothless smile. Frank addressed him

"Doesn't he play like a master?" he said. "He is a true Morphy in the way he plays this game. I admire your manipulation of the pieces, Ace," he said to Joe. He looked swiftly at the board and made his move. "Try this one," he said.

Joe guffawed. "Swish, Ace," he said, swooping down upon DeTorres' unprotected queen, removing it, and upsetting four or five pieces on both sides of the board.

"I didn't see, Ace," Frank said, beginning to smile. Two of the old men laughed. The third yawned noisily and moved toward one of the benches leaning against the wall.

Frank resigned. He began to set up his pieces in preparation for another game. At one-thirty Phil Zand and Lee Miller walked in. They had gone to a movie, had coffee, and come to the chess club looking for Joe Muneco. They knew that he could be found here on Sunday mornings at this time after taking his girl home.

"Watch him!" Joe said agitatedly to Phil, glancing momentarily at Lee, as the two came over and sat down. "You shouldn't have taken him off the leash. He's liable to rape small boys."

"No need," Lee said. "I was refreshed last night. A very sweet young thing I met at a dance. How's Anne?"

The query might have been solicitous, but it was very poorly placed. Suddenly Muneco was no longer amusing or amused.

"She's all right," he said, looking at Lee. "Unless you just killed her by mentioning her name."

Lee laughed. He laughed unpleasantly, the only way he knew how.

"I thought you had signed a non-aggression pact," Phil said.

"Only verbal," Joe said. "It can be busted at any time."

"What's new?" Frank said to Phil.

"I'm glad you asked," Phil said. "My profession. I'm going to be a psychologist."

"That's nice," Frank said. "We are in need of psychologists. But you've got to gain weight if you want to be healthy enough to pursue your studies. You're very thin, in spite of your weight-lifting."

Phil laughed.

"I am thy father's spirit," Joe said. "Doomed for a certain term to walk the night, and for the day confined to fast in fires, till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid," he said, "to tell the secrets of my prison-house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul," checkmate Ace," he said.

"You're a genius, Muneco," Lee said, sitting in the chair Frank had just vacated. Frank visited Mrs. Gelber for some coffee.

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"Second collection, I know nothing about music. If I ever again say anything implying I know anything at all about psychology, may I suffer excruciating pain."

"Okay," Phil laughed. "I'm sorry. You're an intellectual."

Frank returned with his coffee. He knew these two, Lee and Phil, and also Ben, because of their friendship with Joe Muneco. They had graduated from high school with Joe three years ago, and he had continued seeing them, about once a week, since then. They were not particularly interesting, Frank thought, although they were supposed to be bright, and he guessed that this was what Joe saw in them. He could talk to them in Joe's presence, but doubted if he could find anything to say to them under other circumstances. These never arose since he ran into them only when he was with Muneco. Now he returned with the coffee and he saw skinny Phil leaning on the table, his hair mussed, smiling at Muneco, and it struck him what a particularly dull life Phil must lead.

"Hey Phil, you still got it?" he said.

"Got what?"

"Your chastity. Last time I heard, you had still got it."

"Still got it," Phil said, smiling ruefully, but resignedly, as if talking about an amputated arm.

"I can't understand it, Ace," Frank said. "What's the good of going to college if they don't teach you about life? That's why I didn't go to college, because they had no courses in screwing."

"That's right, Ace," Joe mumbled, engrossed in the game.

"You should have gone," Lee said. "You're a great loss to the academic world."

Frank had begun to understand that the things Lee said in jest were no different in tone from the things he said when he was being nasty. It was just the way he talked, everything seeming an insult. He thought for a moment, and decided from the context that Lee was jesting.

"I appreciate this," Frank said.

Frank sat down to kibitz the game, and Phil read the *Sunday Times*. If no one else arrived and even if someone else did, they would spend an hour or two at the chess



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"The others were already outside and down the one landing to the street.

"Okay Ace," Joe said. "Castle early and open up a rook file. I'll see you." He turned and walked toward the door.

"So long Ace," Frank said.

## 2

The car was riding north, along First Avenue, toward Forty-second Street.

"Are we going to Times Square?" Phil said.

"If that's what you want," Ben said. "Although I was going to drive you down to Miami. It's time you phony authors and literary critics and psychologists and perverts learned that the East Side of New York is not the center of the world."

"How do you know that?" Joe said.

"Hearsay," Ben said. "But it sounds logical."

"We'll go to Miami next time," Phil yawned. "I've got to wake up early tomorrow."

On the corner of Twenty-sixth Street Ben stopped for a light. Muneco, sitting up front, glanced from the window. "Hey," he said suddenly. Ben, following Joe's eye, saw a figure turn the corner of Twenty-Sixth and walk out of his range of vision. "Was that Barbara Bedner?" Joe said.

"I don't know," Ben said. "Shall we find out?"

"Who's Barbara Bedner?" Phil said.

"What difference does it make?" Lee said. "It's a girl's name."

The light changed and Ben turned the corner. "I've told you about her," Joe said, peering from the window. The street was dark and he could not be sure. "That's the girl they sent up for the impairment of everybody's morals. The record holder. I didn't know they'd let her out."

"Is it her?" Ben said, slowing down a few yards behind the girl.

"I can't tell," Joe said.

The girl turned off and walked up to a stoop leading to the entrance of a building.

"Well you'd better find out if you're going to find out," Lee said.

Joe opened his window.

"Barbara," he called. "Is that Bobbie Bedner?"

The girl turned, startled. It was late at night and she had not heard the car turn the corner. She saw the car but could not see who was inside. The car was a 1950 model, a red convertible. Ben and his father had washed and polished it that same day. It looked like a new car. Bobbie Bedner came, looking very curious, down the stairs and up to the open window.

"Hello," Joe said cheerfully. "I thought it was you. Do you remember me?"

"Yeah," Bobbie said, smiling blankly. "Yeah, I remember you. What's your name?"

Joe grinned. "Joe," he said. "I used to belong to the Werewolves. Remember the Werewolves?"

Bobbie grinned innocently back at him. "Yeah, I remember," she said. "How is everybody? How's Fat Andy?"

"He's fine," Joe said. "He got caught with a stolen car. He won't be around for a while."

"Gee, that's a shame," Bobbie said, meaning it. She laughed. "How's Tony?" she asked.

"I haven't seen him around," Joe said. "I think he's in the army. But where have you been all this while?" he asked her, knowing she would lie, anxious to see how badly. "I haven't seen you for a long time."

Bobbie giggled. "Oh, I been away. I just got back to New York last week."

"You live in this house?" Lee said to her.

For the first time she took notice of the other occupants of the car.

"Yeah," she said, wary, but not unfriendly. Then to Joe: "Who are your friends?"

"Shall I introduce you?" Joe said. She nodded, laughing.

"Bobbie Bedner," Joe said. "This is Brock, the driver and part-owner of the car. This is Miller," and he gestured toward the back of the car. "consultant in pornography, and this is Zand, who is interested in people."

Bobbie laughed, taking her cue from his tone. "What are you doing out so late?" she said. "Just driving around?"

"Yeah," Lee said, anxious to make it.

"How about you?"

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"I went to a dance," Bobbie said. "At the Twenty-eighth Street Y."

"Did you have a nice time?" Lee said.

"Not so bad," Bobbie said, laughing.

There was a pause. Ben thought he might as well. She was standing there with her hand resting on the edge of the lowered window.

"Would you like to go for a ride?" he said."

Bobbie laughed uncertainly. "I don't know," she said. "My mother expected me home early, and it's late already."

"So," Joe said, "if it's late already it won't hurt if you come in a little later. Come on," he said persuasively, "We'll go for a ride."

"Where are you going?" the girl asked.

"We don't know," Ben said drily. "That's what makes it so exciting. We might go almost anywhere. Maybe you can help find us a destination."

The girl stood there, her hand on the window. Joe opened the door suddenly and beckoned to her. "Come on," he said. "Any place you say. When you're ready to come back, we'll bring you back."

"It's a nice car," she said.

Joe laughed. He reached out his hand and pulled her one step closer to the car. Then he let go and moved closer to Brock, making room for her. Bobbie Bedner laughed and got into the car.

Ben backed the car to the corner and they were back on First Avenue. He rode to Fourteenth Street and stopped for a light.

"You're looking well," Joe said. "You're looking much better than when I saw you last."

"Yeah," Bobbie said. "I gained a lot of weight."

She had changed. She had gotten into the car, but it wasn't as easy as it once would have been. Joe decided to let DeTorres find out how matters stood with the girl. Although he could have done so, his friends might interpret his efforts as illustrating a lack of sensibility. Or it might give them something to laugh about.

"Drive back to the club," Joe said. "We'll pick up Cripple."

"What club?" Bobbie asked alarmingly. "Who's Cripple?"

"Just a chess club," Joe said soothingly. "You remember Cripple. That's Frank, Frank DeTorres. You remember Frank, don't you?"

"What do you want to see him for?" Bobbie said.

"We don't want to see him," Joe said. "We just thought after all this time, he would be glad to see you. He won't hurt you."

Bobbie laughed. "I know he won't hurt me," she said. "I just thought we were going for a ride."

"We will," Ben said, knowing what was on Muneco's mind. "Just as soon as we pick up Frank."

He turned left on Seventeenth Street, pulled up in front of Gelber's Chess Club, and parked the car.

### 3

Frank was happy to have Muneco back and happier still when he saw who was with him. The presence of Bobbie Bedner, he felt sure, would liven up the evening. He thought immediately of his pigeon coop and its steam-heating. When Ben Brock came upstairs, after parking the car, he found Frank and Joe seated near the window, Frank talking earnestly to Bobbie, and Lee and Phil standing some distance away leaning against a chess table. He walked over to these two.

"Set 'em up," he said to Lee. "You can have the white pieces."

"I'll have to beat you in five moves," Lee apologized. "Don Juan is operating, and I don't know how long we'll be here."

"If he's got to operate," Ben said, "you may be here a long time. If this girl is the girl she's cracked up to be she should be on her hands and knees begging for it."

Joe came over.

"How does it look?" Lee said.

"I don't know," Joe said. "Frank is trying to get her to go to his place but she doesn't like pigeon coops."

"Ask her about bar-bell clubs," Phil said. "I've got the key to the club. There won't be anyone up there this time of night."

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"I'll keep you posted," Joe said. He walked back to Frank and the girl.

"Your move," Lee said.

Ben looked at him. "I can't understand your hanging around, Miller," he said to him, "in the hope of laying a broad who has already been on intimate terms with everyone in the neighborhood. Haven't you got any standards?"

"Very funny," Lee said. "In this respect I'm like you. When it comes to women, anywhere and anytime."

"Are you looking forward to this prospect?" Ben said to Phil.

"Why not?" Phil said.

"Hell," Ben said, "you've had it so long you might as well save it for your wife. Listen to me," he said earnestly, "and don't throw yourself away on this harlot. Somewhere, there's a sweet, young, innocent girl who has been ordained by heaven to . . ."

"Balls to you," Phil said.

Muneco returned.

"The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day," Joe began, with every intention of completing the poem.

"Can it," Ben said. "What's the latest?"

"She met a psychiatrist in reform school," Joe said. "He told her the reason she did what she did was her father died when she was six years old and she missed male attention. She agrees with his diagnosis and she's turning over a new leaf."

"You mean all the psychiatrist did was tell her?" Phil asked professionally.

"I don't know," Joe said. "She's been away for two years. Maybe she underwent intensive therapy. Whatever happened, she's metamorphosized."

"So?" Lee said.

"We're going to take her downstairs, try to soften her up," Joe said. "Give me the keys to the car," he said to Ben.

"You going somewhere?" Lee said suspiciously.

"Hey," Muneco laughed, taking the keys from Ben. "You think we'd run out on you, Miller? We can't leave you."

This whole party is in Phil's honor. After Phil lays her we're going to nail her over his fireplace for a trophy." He jingled the keys at DeTorres and walked to the door. Frank got up, took the girl by the hand, and followed Muneco. She went without protesting but she did not look happy.

"Does Cripple have a driver's license?" Lee said.  
Ben nodded.

"If those guys pull anything," Lee said, "I'm going to make Muneco pay for it."

"You wouldn't tell his mother, would you?" Ben said.

"No," Lee said. "I'll tell his girl. I'll call his girl and let her know how Muneco spends his Saturday nights." He looked toward the window. Phil, following his glance, walked over and looked out.

"The car's still there," Phil said. "Save your money."

"Your move," Ben said.

Lee moved.

"How long we going to wait here?" he said.

"Give them five more minutes," Ben said.

Phil walked over and looked out the window.

"Hey Zand," Ben called to him.

"What?"

"You're basing your life on a lie," Ben said. "You want to become a clinical psychologist. You want to help the maladjusted. Now here is this girl who has been abnormal, at least quantitatively, but has since been returned to normalcy by a practicing psychiatrist. Instead of trying to keep her there you're party to a scheme whose aim is to tear down her defenses and re-sink her in the morass of abnormality."

He looked sternly at Phil; then disgustedly shook his head.

"Look," Phil said. "Better her than me. She's neurotic from too much of it and I'm neurotic from too little. It's her or me. And I've got my career at stake."

"He thinks it's the panacea," Lee sneered. "Once he gets laid, he's solved all his problems. What an idiot."

"Okay," Ben said. "I resign. Let's go downstairs."

They got up and put on their coats. "Hey Kurtz." Ben called to the old man who had been sitting on a bench

watching them. "A lineup. Anybody else, we're charging two-fifty. For you, a buck and a half. How about it?"

The old man coughed up some phlegm and spit it into a handkerchief. He was unimpressed. "If I couldn't do better," he said, standing and stretching himself, "I'd shoot myself."

The three left the club.

#### 4

Ben looked in at the back window of the car. Joe and Frank were in the front seat with the girl between them. Frank had his arm around the girl and was bending over her. Ben motioned the others to wait. After a while the girl worked an arm free from behind her and pushed Frank's face away. Ben walked to the side of the car and knocked on the window. Muneco opened the door.

"Come on in," he said. "We'll go for a ride."

Lee and Phil got into the back of the car. Ben squeezed into the driver's seat. There were four people in the front of the car. Joe moved over, making room for Ben, at the same time pushing Bobbie closer to Frank. Frank was talking into her ear.

"What's the matter baby? Don't you want to kiss me? Just a little kiss?"

"No-oo" the girl said, indicating that she had said it many times before. Frank leaned over her and kissed her. After a great many seconds had passed she pushed his face away.

"I don't know what's happened to the way you kiss," Frank said to her. "It's not like you used to. Who ever heard of a girl kissing with her mouth closed?"

"I don't want to kiss you," Bobbie said primly.

"Two years ago," Frank said, "I wouldn't kiss you. I would screw you. That's more fun, isn't it? What's happened to you in two years?"

"I told you," Bobbie said laughing. Her laugh was heavy, like her voice, and unsteady, but it was not the way she used to laugh. "I don't do that any more."

"For nobody?"



"Who's going home first?" he said.

"Home?" The girl was indignant. "I thought we were going for a ride."

"You still want to go for a ride?" Ben said.

"Sure. Let's go to Coney Island."

"No," Joe said to her. "Let's go lift some weights. Phil has the key to his bar-bell club."

The girl laughed. "Ah, die young," she said pleasantly. She recognized that the only serious threat had been Frank, and he was gone. She relaxed now, and looked forward to a good time being chauffeured around.

"You can drive me home," Phil said, seeing the futility of remaining. I've got to wake up early tomorrow."

"How about you, Miller?" Ben said.

"No hurry," Lee said. "As a matter of fact you can take me home after you drop her off."

The girl laughed. "You ain't gonna miss nothin'," she said.

Joe laughed. "You're a dead pigeon, Miller," he said. "Even this dumb broad reads you like a book. You're shallower than a wading pool."

"That's extremely funny, Muneco," Lee said.

"I'm not a dumb broad," Bobbie said good-naturedly.

"Then what are you a dumb?" Joe said.

"Oh, die young," the girl said.

"Where would you like to go *besides* Coney Island?" Ben said.

"What's the matter with Coney Island?"

"There is nothing open and nobody in Coney Island in January," Ben explained patiently. "So I suggest you suggest something else."

"Let's go where there's excitement," Bobbie said. "Maybe we can see a fight somewhere."

"We have just the thing for you," Joe said. "Take her to Brooklyn," he said to Ben.

"That's right," Ben said. "Brooklyn's a wild town."

"What's so wild about Brooklyn?" the girl said.

"Everything goes positively smash in Brooklyn," Ben said. "There's a fight on every street corner. Trunk murders take place in front of your eyes. Also, there's a little



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"Bye-bye Brock," she said. "It was nice meeting you." She walked up the stoop and was gone; into the building. They sat there for a while, not talking.

"A hundred percent American girl," Ben said finally. "I'm convinced you had her pegged wrong."

"A hundred and sixty times," Joe said absently, "in three days. That must have been one hell of a psychiatrist."

"He wasn't an East Side boy," Ben said, shaking his head. "He performed a great disservice to an entire neighborhood. He dissolved the last trace of communal endeavor to which we could proudly point."

"Yeah," Joe said, leaning back on the seat, his hands locked behind his head. "Drive around to Seventeenth Street. What we've got to do now is get some coffee."

## THE GIRL AT THE FAIR

*by Denys Val Baker*

*"For both of them," says Denys Val Baker, "the world would never be quite the same again." The boy and girl of whom he speaks have made no earth-shaking discovery, have done nothing which can ever be shared with others. Even to each other they are strangers. They are merely—wonderful lovers.*

The American airman was on leave, his first leave since coming to Britain a few weeks previously. At first he had felt like staying at the camp, clinging to the faint comfort of familiar surroundings, a way of life he understood, some sort of echo of the world he had grown up in way back in Wisconsin. Then he felt ashamed of his lack of spirit, and he put on his smart new uniform and packed a few things and went down to the nearest station. He had a vague idea about going to London, but when he reached the station the first thing that caught his eye was an indicator: Trains For the West Country, Platform 2. And because it was a sunny day and there was somehow a romantic ring about that phrase, "the West Country," the airman changed his mind. He crossed under the subway and went up to the little yellow and brown ticket office.

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and booked a ticket to the one place in the west of England he happened to have heard of, Exeter.

When he got there, however, he found that Exeter was a big place, a cathedral city with great sprawling suburbs, and somehow not what he wanted at all. So he took the advice of a friendly porter and caught a local train that meandered among heavily-wooded valleys, broken here and there with fields of rich red soil, finally depositing him at a snug little market town by the name of Okehampton. Here there was a comfortable hotel, a nice leisurely town square filled with bustling farmers and their folk, quite a few shops, some snug little pubs: and over everything something of the same smell of the country that the airman remembered so lovingly from his own home town.

For a few days the airman wandered about, sometimes around the town, sometimes venturing out into the countryside, climbing hills, following sloping fields down to winding rivers that sparkled in the sunlight and were alive with trout. He tried to convince himself that he was happy, that he was getting a great kick out of the holiday, that the change alone would do him good. But he was aware all the time of his loneliness, the sort of loneliness that could not be alleviated by casual talk in a bar, nor friendly nods going down a high street. It was a loneliness that had been with him ever since he joined up, ever since, at a stroke of the pen, he had been whisked away from the familiar scenery, the natural companionship of the boys and girls he had played with, gone to school with, grown up with. It was a loneliness that seemed to breed and swell upon itself; sometimes it became so intolerable that he could have screamed out.

He managed not to do that, but he carried the loneliness about with him, like some inevitable burden, while secretly he longed for a companion, for the contact that would bring him release and relief. And he knew somehow that he would not find that among these kindly but slow and stolid Devonshire folk.

So it gave him a stir of hope, of strange anticipation, when he saw the gaudy posters plastered about the walls of the town announcing the arrival of a fair. He stayed on



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was small and dark and vivacious, with bright black eyes and a mass of thick curly black hair tossed carelessly over her shoulders. She might have been quite young, sixteen or seventeen, but she managed to convey an impression of being much older, much wiser. She had high cheekbones and a pale skin, and from her ears dangled two enormous golden earrings. She was a gypsy girl.

At first, though the airman could not take his eyes off the girl, her own gaze wandered about restlessly, without cease, as if she were impatient with her immobility and sought to be everywhere with her eyes that she could not be with her actual presence. Then, under the steady weight of his stare, she turned slowly, and at last she met his gaze. It seemed to the airman that he could not have looked away to save his life, and he fancied wildly, for a moment, that it was the same for the girl. But then she seemed to toss her head up, rather like one of the wild horses he had seen outside on the moors, and she looked away out over the lights of the fair again.

Without being aware of having moved, the airman found himself standing beside the coconut stall.

"Could I have some balls, please?" he said, controlling his voice.

Without speaking the girl handed him four wooden balls and took his sixpence.

"Well, now," said the airman, "I guess this shouldn't be too difficult."

The girl did not answer, but he felt her watching him as he got into position, and because in that way he suddenly felt her participating in his life, he threw the balls gaily, with an abandonment unusual for him.

All the same, he didn't hit a coconut, nor did he with the next sixpennyworth, nor with the third lot.

"Say," said the airman amusedly, "I reckon you'd better teach me how to throw."

But when he looked inquiringly at the girl, she merely shrugged and offered him four more balls. But this time, as he prepared to throw, he caught a faint smile around her mouth. He grinned and took aim and knocked a coconut down first shot.

The girl picked up the coconut and handed it to the air-

man. He stood turning it over and over in his hands, as if trying to make up his mind about something. Then, rather shyly, he held it out towards the girl.

"Go on, you have it. I'd—like you to."

The girl looked surprised, and then hesitated. As she hesitated she, too, turned the coconut over and over between her fingers. As she did so the airman saw that they were strong fingers, and brown from the sun, brown like the girl's bare arms, and like her face and neck. He felt the physical presence of the girl beside him, almost in anguish, and he had to stand there, speechless, waiting for her to make some move.

But the girl, too, seemed suddenly lost in a dream, so that for a long time the airman did not know whether she was thinking of other things, or whether in some way he had reached through to her consciousness. And as the supple fingers turned the brown, furry coconut over and over, he had the sudden wild idea that it was himself, his personality, perhaps his whole life, that was being turned over, helplessly in the grasp of those sensuous fingers.

At last, when he thought he could bear it no longer, the girl's fingers suddenly fastened hard onto the coconut. He looked up and caught her eyes upon him, half shrouded behind the deep lids. She did not speak, but slowly she drew the coconut closer to herself, clutching it tightly to her body. And around her lips he saw the secretive smile that he had half desired, half feared.

He had to go away then. He had to move on, to make a pretense of visiting other stalls, of joining in the leisurely tour of the fair. But all the time he revolved as it were, around an orbit. All the time he looked across all the bright lights, across all the distance back to the coconut stall.

And each time, that was the marvelous thing, he found the girl watching him. Each time he turned his head, what he felt was in some way understood and felt by the girl. It was as if in desperation his loneliness, his pent-up desire for contact, had forced its way through all the veneer of the fair, had struck home to the depths of the gypsy girl's heart.

Although hardly a word had been exchanged between them,

man knew this was so. He knew this because all the time the girl's eyes followed him, and because if he turned and looked back, their gazes met steadily, and there was a stream of sensation that flowed between them, like a mounting river.

It seemed to the airman, then, that the evening melted into perpetuity, that time came to a standstill. Existence was nothing but his endless perambulations round and round the fair, in the background the grinding music of the organs and radiograms, the echoing voices, the whirling machines . . . noise and color and spinning lights . . . and always, the only steadfast thing, the gypsy girl, leaning quietly, almost without moving, against her stall, everything about her still—except those restless, piercing, black eyes, that seemed to be her very soul; and that spoke like a voice to him across all the distance.

He had no idea what he would do, until he found himself standing irresolute beside one of the corners of the fair, where a dark cavity opened between two stalls. Beyond lay the mysterious freedom and escape of open fields and a distant river. He turned, and looked with faint inquiry over at the girl. Again, he might almost have spoken his thoughts. The girl seemed to shake herself into waking, as if from a dream, and he saw her call over to one of the other assistants. Then, slowly, she began walking across the green grass toward him.

But before she had gone far, the airman himself had moved. He turned, and plunged blindly between the two stalls, into the waiting darkness. He felt a desire to escape completely from the exposure of the fairground lights, and he scrambled up a sloping field until he had reached the top of the rise where he could turn round and look down upon all the glitter as another world altogether. And there he waited, alone with the night and his beating heart.

He knew the girl was coming when suddenly his view of the fair was darkened. Against the brightness he saw the silhouette of that proud head, that long dark hair, that strange being whom he had never met, and yet secretly knew. He imagined her eyes glowing in the darkness, her breath warming the cool night air. He heard a rustle in the grass, and he knew she was there beside him.

"Hullo," he said awkwardly, and he put a hand out in the darkness and brushed against the soft skin of the girl's forearm. As if awakened by the contact, the airman quickly ran his fingers down the girl's arm and took her by the hand.

"Come on," he said, in a surge of elation. "Let's run—let's run through the night!"

He pulled at the girl's arm, and began running. And as he did so he felt her responding to his mood, as if the flow of excitement passed from his arm into hers. He felt her fingers twined round his own, and the contact seemed to fill him with new strength. He ran across the dark field faster and faster—and all the time the girl ran with him, like some ghostly companion whose presence he sensed by the rush of wind, the light slither of feet on grass, the hissing intake of breath.

Now the fields sloped downwards and all at once they were cut off from the shimmering lights of the fair, alone in the darkness, rushing through the night air down and down and down—down, the airman saw in the faint moonlight, towards the curving gleam of a river, wandering among tall pine trees.

"Look!" he wanted to cry out, "look, we have come to another country!"

And perhaps he really did cry the words, for the girl's grasp tightened in his own, and she seemed to urge him forward so that they almost leaped and bounded over the remaining ground that sloped down between the trees, and ran gently up to the edge of murmuring water.

Here they stopped, as abruptly as they had started, their bodies quivering, their breath coming short.

"Gee," said the airman, between gasps. "That was something. That was great. I felt like—like a horse or something, riding through the air."

The girl said nothing, but stooped and knelt on the bank and put her bare arms into the running water of the river. The airman heard the faint spluttering of the water as it frothed around the girl's arms. Slowly he knelt down beside her, and plunged his own hands deep into the rushing coolness.

After a while the girl raised up her hands so that water

sprang from them and glistened like stars in the moonlight.

"Look," she whispered, as if somehow she had created magic. "The water is alive."

And watching, the airman became aware that not only the water, but everything around him, the trees, the tall grass, the air itself, everything was indeed alive. The whole night seemed alive and bursting with a sense of existence, of magical and eternal life.

"Gee," he said, "I wonder . . ."

But he could not find the words to say more. And as if again sensing his mood, the gypsy girl lifted up her head and laughed, and then smashed her fists down hard into the water, sending cascades streaming like fountains into the air. Again she flung her hands down, and again and again, spouting huge showers of water into the air, the spray falling all over her, all over the airman, enveloping the two of them in some private rainstorm of their own.

"Oh!" cried the airman, feeling the water in his hair, trickling down his face, "oho, you'd splash me, would you! Well, two can play that game, my pretty."

And, alive with a sudden confidence, he would have splashed water over the girl. But in that instant she sprang to her feet, and with a mocking laugh, ran away down the bank, leaping over the humps and boulders with the sure-footedness of a mountain goat.

"Hey!" said the airman. "Hey, come back!" And he burst out laughing, and began running after the girl.

She was so fast, so nimble, that he was half afraid that he might lose her. Then, peering ahead he saw a whirl of movement, and heard a break in the echo of the girl's footsteps. There was a strange silence, and then, unmistakably, the long clean splash of a body diving into the river.

Hurrying up the bank, the airman came upon the bundle of the girl's clothes, flung over some bushes. Grinning, and with a sweet taste of excitement in his mouth, he undressed and ran to the edge and hurled his warm body through the cool night air into the cold waiting water.

"Aaaah!" exclaimed the airman at the first shock. Then he shook his head and blinked his eyes, and took a deep breath. "Hullo . . ." he called through the night. "Look out, my pretty. I'm after you!"

And he began to swim out into the river, with long powerful strokes, peering between each movement for the girl.

He saw her ahead of him, a white streak on the water's surface, and he moved steadily after her, reducing the distance between them until they were almost touching, until indeed they did touch and the airman caught the girl's ankle and pulled her down and towards him. But she wiggled out of his clutch with a swift turn and splashed water into his eyes and when he looked again she had surged forward. It was then that he realised the gypsy girl was swimming across the river to the opposite bank, and he felt glad of this new evidence of their journey away from all that made up their ordinary, familiar world. He had the sudden wild idea that if only they could travel on and on, across innumerable rivers, across whole seas, through the darkest forests, they might never need to return.

But when he reached the opposite bank and pulled himself out of the water, he found that the girl had stopped running away. She stood a little way from him, on a flat boulder, looking up towards the dark and mysterious source from which the river flowed. The moonlight fell upon her gently, so that her body glowed and shone with a whiteness that was half real, half the shimmering quality of a dream. For the airman it was a moment of strange beauty, that he would have liked to keep forever: the girl standing proud and straight against the swirling gleam of the river, like some wild horse that had ridden out of the night moors, with her long dark hair streaming down her shoulders—himself risen up out of the cold water, tense and poised, as if at the brink of some new world.

Yet even as the thought possessed him, he moved forward. He walked tensely, inevitably, towards the gypsy girl, and his hands crept into the dark strands of wet hair. He moved by instinct now: he did not stop to think, or even want to think. He was conscious only that the girl could move no longer, that she stood there waiting, and his hands passed through the cascades of hair and touched the warm living flesh of the girl's white, curved back.

"Ah, my pretty," murmured the airman, "oh, my lovely. . . ."

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And he began running his hands gently up and down the girl's back, feeling not only the warm, pulsating flesh—but also the laughter and love of life beating through her whole body, like waves in the sea.

Then the man took a step forward until his body half enveloped the girl, and their two warmths intermingled, and his arms gently slid over her smooth shoulders and caressed her proud young breasts. As he did so the girl's head fell forward, and he felt the sharp, piercing bite of her teeth into the flesh of his forearm, drawing blood.

Then the airman laughed, the gentle, eternal laugh of sweet wisdom, and his laughter echoed and re-echoed all about, filling the air, reverberating through the forest, riding on the night winds in all directions.

And he bent down and picked her up in his arms, so that before his sudden immense strength she seemed as light as a child, her dark head resting against his warm breast.

"Come, my lovely," cried the airman. "Come my wonderful, my beautiful, my marvelous, my alive-oh-alive-oh darling!"

And he carried her boldly, yet gently, towards their bed of soft grass and fallen leaves, under the shadow of tall trees. He had forgotten the fair, forgotten the time, forgotten everything except the supreme moment.

The girl had forgotten, too. In some strange way she had become a part of the man just as much at the first glance that shot between them over the fairground, as now when he knelt down beside her and their warmth rose up, and their laughter and their wide open mouths were lost among each other, the storms and fires that had smoldered within them both bursting into a common ecstasy.

Time had no meaning. Only the moment was real. The moment, indeed, would pass. The night's mystery would lighten, the harsh day would break. Somewhere else the fair would glitter again, taking back into its brassy folds the gypsy girl. Racing across half the land in a rattling train, the airman would glance sadly out of the window.

But for both of them, the world would never be quite the same again. That was the wonder of their living, their meeting, their loving. That is the wonder of all life, and of all loving.

## MUSSETTE

*by Henri Murger*

*There is a timeless charm in Murger's stories of the Latin Quarter, which suggests that even without the masterstroke of adaption to opera by Puccini, they would still be widely read. For it is the charm of youth, poverty-stricken and in despair, nonetheless determined to love.*

Mademoiselle Musette was an attractive twenty-year-old girl who, a short time after her arrival in Paris, had become what pretty girls do become when they have a fine body, lots of coquetry, some ambition, and no spelling. After having been the joy of suppers in the Latin Quarter for a long time, where she had made a name for herself by singing with a voice continually fresh, if not always true, rustic table songs, which the finest connoisseurs of rhymes have since praised, Mademoiselle Musette suddenly left the Rue de la Harpe to go to live on the Cytherean heights of the Breda Quarter. She was not slow in becoming one of the queens of the aristocracy of pleasure and little by little made her way toward that goal of fame which consists of being mentioned in the Paris newspapers or having one's pictures on sale at all print dealers.

However, Mademoiselle Musette was an exception to the women among whom she lived. It was her nature, in-

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somewhat refined and poetic, like all women who are truly women, to love luxury and all the pleasures luxury brings in its wake. Her coquetry had flaming desires for whatever was beautiful and distinguished; daughter of the people, she had never once been out of her element in the midst of the most regal splendors. But Mademoiselle Musette, who was young and beautiful, would never be willing to be the mistress of a man who was not as young and handsome as she. She had once been seen courageously refusing the splendid offers of an old man, so rich that he was called the Peru of the Chaussee D'Antin, and he had built a gold stairway for Musette's whimsical feet. Sensible and clever, she had a horror of fools and simpletons whatever their age, title or name. She was a fine and beautiful girl was this Musette, who in love adopted in part the famous epigram of Champfort: Love is the interchange of two whims. Furthermore, never had her liaisons been preceded by one of those shameful bargains which dishonor modern chivalry. As she said herself, Musette played fair and demanded that she be paid in the currency of sincerity.

But if her whims were violent and sudden, they were never sufficiently lasting to reach the pitch of passion. And the great elasticity of her feelings, the little attention she paid to the purses, and to the rank of those who wished to court her, gave a mobility to her life, which was perpetually alternating between blue coupes and omnibuses, mezzanines and the fifth floor, silk gowns and cotton dresses. O lovely girl! Living poem of youth, with the deep laugh and the gay song! Heart full of pity, beating for the whole world underneath the revealing blouse. O Mademoiselle Musette! You who are the sister of Bernerette and of Mimi Pinson! It would take the genius of Alfred de Musset to describe worthily the carefree and wandering way you took through the flowery paths of youth; and surely he would have liked to praise you too, if like me he had heard you sing with your sweet false notes the rural couplet of one of your favorite roundelay!

The tale we are going to tell is one of the most charming episodes in the whole career of this charming adventuress who has hurled so many bonnets over so many mills.

At one time when she was the mistress of a young state's

councilor who had munificently put into her hands the key to his inheritance, Mademoiselle Musette was in the habit of giving a reception once a week in her lovely drawing room on the Rue de la Bruyere. These receptions were like most Parisian receptions with the difference that here everyone enjoyed himself; when there was no place left to sit down they sat on each other, and it was often necessary for two people to use the same glass. Rudolph, who was Musette's friend and only a friend (neither one ever knew why), asked Musette permission to bring his friend Marcel with him; a talented young man, he added, for whom the future is busy embroidering an academician's robe.

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Casimir Bonjour will never be as astonished the day he told of his nomination to the Institute as Marcel and Rudolph were on arriving at Musette's house. This is the reason. Mademoiselle Musette, who for some time had been quarreling with her lover, the state's councilor, had been deserted by him at a very critical moment. As she was pursued by her proprietor and her creditors, her belongings had been seized and removed to the courtyard to be taken away and sold the next day. In spite of this event, Mademoiselle Musette never thought of telling her guests not to come and did not give up her reception. She solemnly turned the courtyard into a drawing room, put a rug on the pavement, got everything in readiness as usual, dressed herself to receive, and invited all the lodgers to her little party, to the splendor of which God kindly volunteered to provide illumination.

This joke was tremendously successful. Never had any of Musette's receptions had such animation and gaiety; they were still dancing and singing when the agents came to take away the furnishings, rugs, and divans, and perforce the guests had to go home.

Musette sang as the party dispersed:

*They'll talk a long while, la ri ra,  
Of my Thursday evening party—  
They'll talk a long while—la ri ri.*

Marcel and Rudolph were left alone with Musette who mounted to her apartment where nothing remained but the bed.

"Ah me," sighed Musette, "my adventure isn't so amusing now; I'll have to go lodge at the Beautiful Star Inn. I know it well, that inn; there are terrible drafts."

"Ah! Madame," said Marcel, "if I had the powers of the God Pluto I would give you a temple more beautiful than Solomon's. But . . ."

"You are not Pluto, my friend. It doesn't make any difference. I appreciate the idea. Oh well," she added, glancing around her apartment, "all this bores me here, and then the furniture was old. I've had it almost six

months. But that isn't the worst of it all; after the ball one sups, I suppose."

"Let us sup . . . pose then," said Marcel who had the disease of punning especially in the morning, when he was horrible.

As Rudolph had won some money at poker, which he had played during the evening, he took Musette and Marcel into a restaurant which was just opening.

After lunch, the three friends, who had no wish to sleep, discussed spending the day in the country, and as they were near a railroad they took the first train to leave and got off at Saint Germain.

All day they strolled through the woods and did not return to Paris until seven that evening and then in spite of Marcel, who insisted that it must only be twelve-thirty and if it was growing dark it was because the weather was cloudy.

During the night of the reception and all the rest of the day Marcel, whose heart was an explosive which one glance could ignite, had been smitten with Mademoiselle Musette and had made violent love to her, as he said to Rudolph. He had been just about to offer to buy the beautiful girl surroundings more beautiful even than her old ones with the income from the sale of his famous picture of the crossing of the Red Sea. So the artist saw with pain the time arrive when he would have to separate from Musette, who in permitting him to kiss her hands, her neck, and various other accessories, limited herself to shoving him gently away every time that he wished to force an entry to her heart.

On arriving at Paris, Rudolph had left his friend with the young girl who begged the artist to accompany her to her door.

"Will you let me come to see you?" Marcel asked. "I will do your portrait."

"My dear," said the pretty girl, "I cannot give you my address since perhaps I will have none tomorrow but I will come to see you and I will mend your suit which has such a big hole in it that one could walk out of it without paying."

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"I will look for you as for the Messiah," promised Marcel.

"It won't be long," laughed Musette.

"What a lovely girl," mused Marcel as he walked slowly away. "She is the incarnation of gaiety. I will make two holes in my suit."

He had not gone thirty feet when he was tapped on the shoulder; it was Musette.

"My dear Mr. Marcel," she said, "are you a French knight?"

"I am Rubens and my lady, that is my device."

"Well then, listen to my tale of woe and have pity, noble sire," began Musette, who was slightly affected by literature, although her slaughter of grammar amounted to a St. Bartholomew's massacre; "my proprietor has taken my apartment key and it is eleven o'clock. Do you understand?"

"I understand," said Marcel offering his arm to Musette. He took her to his studio, situated along the Quai des Fleurs. Musette was drooping with sleep, but she had still enough strength to say to Marcel as she pressed his hand, "You remember what you have promised me."

"Oh Musette! charming girl," said the artist in a slightly strained tone. "You are here under a friendly roof. Sleep in peace. I am going away."

"Why?" asked Musette, her eyes almost closed. "I have no fear, I promise you; besides there are two rooms. I will sleep on your sofa."

"My sofa is too hard to sleep on; there are cobblestones in it. I am giving you my bed. I will ask for one for myself from a friend who lives on my landing. It is more prudent," he said. "I ordinarily keep my word, but I am twenty-two and you are eighteen, O Musette . . . and I am going away. Good night."

The next morning at eight o'clock Marcel came back with a pot of flowers which he had bought at the market. He found Musette asleep where she had thrown herself on the bed, still dressed. At the noise he made she woke up and held out her hand to Marcel.

"Good boy," she said to him.

"Good boy," repeated Marcel. "Aren't you making fun of me?"

"Oh, why do you say that?" asked Musette. "That isn't nice of you; instead of saying unpleasant things, offer me that pretty pot of flowers."

"That's really why I brought them up. Take them and in return for my hospitality sing me one of your lovely songs; the echo of my roof will perhaps keep a bit of your voice and I shall still hear you after you have gone."

"Oh! So you want to put me out?" asked Musette. "And if I don't want to go! Listen, Marcel, I haven't mounted thirty-six steps not to say what I think. You please me and I please you. It isn't love but it is perhaps the beginning. Well, I am not going to leave. I stay and I will stay here as long as the flowers which you just gave me do not fade."

"Ah!" Marcel cried, "but they will be withered in two days. If I'd only know I would have bought *immortelles*."

For two weeks Musette and Marcel had lived together and led, though often without money, the most lovely life in the world. Musette felt for the artist a tenderness which had no relation to her former passions, and Marcel began to fear that he was seriously in love with his mistress. Not knowing that she was at all worried over being too fond of him, he looked every morning to see the condition the flowers were in whose death was to bring to end their liaison, and he couldn't explain their freshness each day. But he soon found the secret of the mystery. One night on waking, Musette was no longer at his side. He got up, went into the room, and saw his mistress who was taking advantage of his sleep every night to water the flowers and keep them from dying.

## JOEY'S SISTER

*by Donald Honig*

*Innocence, once lost, is lost forever,  
and the moment of its departure can be a  
shattering one. In a story published here  
for the first time, Donald Honig captures  
that moment with memorable artistry and  
vitality.*

Joey was sitting on the stoop. In his hand he was holding a small stack of cards with pictures of baseball players on them. He was staring seriously, reverently at them, shuffling them slowly one over the other. Joey was only ten. He thought that baseball players were the greatest, most important people in the world.

His mother appeared at the front window and said to him, "Joey, what are you doing?"

"Nothin'," he murmured, not taking his eyes from the picture cards.

"I want you to find your sister," his mother said.

"Hannah?"

"Do you have any other sisters?"

"I don't know," he said abstractedly.

"Put those pictures away and go look for her." A mild insistence shaded his mother's tone.

Joey turned around and looked at her. He screwed up his face. He appeared to be emerging from his lethargy of reverence.



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Again. He left the candy store chewing mightily on gum. He chewed industriously for a few moments, until the flavor was gone, and then he took a deep breath and shot the wad from his mouth, sending it spinning into the street.

There was an empty lot up ahead. There were many of them in the neighborhood. The lot was very dark. There were a lot of trees and high weeds and some corners of the lot were obscured from sight. He began cutting through, adventurously, walking soundlessly.

A narrow path wound through the weeds. He kept to it, watching it gravely in the dark.

He heard a sound, like a murmur of laughter. He stopped and stood still, looking about, his small face wrinkling quizzically. He looked toward a clump of trees which were blackly gathered in the far corner of the lot. The sounds were there.

He stood listening, not breathing. He heard the quiet shuffle of feet in the weeds. There were low, whispered voices. His curiosity was struck. Silently, carefully, he went through the weeds in a tense half crouch. The further he went the more it thrilled him. The tip of his tongue emerged, held between his teeth.

As he came closer the voices became more distinct. The laughter had stopped. The voices were tense, serious, very low. He slipped to his hands and knees and paused there, staring round-eyed through the many, slender weeds. He crept forward, the weeds bending soundlessly aside at his touch. He crept nearer, his breath suspended, feeling from time to time in his pocket for the safety of his picture cards.

He stopped. Beyond the weeds were the trees and their low branches. He saw two people under one of the trees, close against the trunk. It was a boy and a girl, and they were kissing.

He inched forward, intrigued. He came to the edge of the tall weeds. Ahead was a slight, rocky clearing, and then the trees and the two embracing people. Joey let himself down on his stomach, flat, staring breathlessly.

The couple broke their kiss and as they came apart, still in each other's arms, Joey recognized his sister. He was startled. He remembered now that he was supposed to be



## SISTER APARICIÓN

*by Emilia Pardo Bazán*

*A love so great that it gives itself  
blindly, only to suffer incredible  
degradation at the hands of the beloved,  
is the subject of this remarkable Spanish  
story. But can a love so degraded ever  
be destroyed? Only Sister Aparición had  
the answer.*

Through the low, double grille of the convent of the Sisters of St. Clare in S—— I saw a prostrate nun praying. She lay in front of the high altar, her face against the floor, her arms outstretched, and her body absolutely immobile. She seemed no more alive than the supine statues of a queen and a princess whose alabaster sepulchers adorned the chancel. Suddenly the nun sat up, no doubt to breathe, and I could see her. It was evident that she must have been very beautiful in her younger years, as one can see that ruined walls were once a splendid palace. The nun could as easily have been eighty as ninety; her face had the yellow pallor of the dead, and her trembling head, sunken mouth, and white eyebrows indicated that she had reached an age at which the passage of time is no longer noted.

The remarkable thing about that spectral face, which was no longer of this world, was its eyes. Defying time, they still preserved their fire, their intense blackness, and

a violently impassioned and dramatic expression. They had a look that once seen could never be forgotten. Such volcanic eyes would be inexplicable in a nun who had entered the convent offering God an innocent heart. They spoke of a stormy past; they gave off the light of some tragic memory. I was consumed by curiosity, but without hope of ever learning the secret of the nun. Chance, however, took it upon itself to satisfy my desire to the full.

That same evening, at the round dining-table of the inn, I struck up an acquaintance with an elderly gentleman, very talkative and wide awake, one of those who love to give a stranger information. Flattered by my interest, he threw open the files of his wonderful memory. I had no more than mentioned the Convent of St. Clare and alluded to the impression the eyes of the old nun had made on me than my guide burst out, "Ah, Sister Aparición! Yes indeed, yes indeed. There is certainly something about her eyes. Her history is written there. Believe me or not, those furrows in her cheeks, which, seen close, look like canals, were plowed by her tears. Weeping for forty years! A lot of salt water could fall in that length of time. And yet the water never dimmed the embers of her eyes. Poor Sister Aparición! I can tell you the story of her life better than anybody else, for my father knew her as a girl, and I even believe he courted her a little. They say she was like a goddess.

"Sister Aparición was called Irene before she took the veil. Her parents were of good family. They had several children, but the others died, and they concentrated all their love and indulgence on Irene, their only child. The town where she was born was A——. And destiny, which begins to weave the rope with which to hang us from the sheets of our cradle, willed it that this same town should be the birthplace of the famous poet—"

I gave a cry and, taking the words out of the mouth of the narrator, pronounced the glorious name of the author of *The Fallen Archangel*, perhaps the most genuine representative of the romantic fever; a name that carries in its accents an edge of contemptuous arrogance, of ~~sarcastic~~ disdain or bitter irony, and of ~~despairing~~ ~~desolate~~ nostalgia. That name and the look of the ~~old woman~~ ~~old woman~~

in my imagination, though as yet I knew nothing of the link between them, but already sensing, by their union, one of those dramas of the heart which flow living blood.

"That is he," repeated my informant, "the famous Juan de Camargo, the pride of the village of A——. It has neither mineral springs, nor a miracle-working saint, nor a cathedral, nor Roman inscriptions, nor anything of interest to show visitors, but it proudly points out in its square, 'This is the house where Camargo was born.'"

"Ah," I interrupted, "now I see. Sister Aparición—Irene, I mean—fell in love with Camargo, he paid no attention to her, and she entered the convent to forget—"

"Just a minute," exclaimed the narrator, smiling, "just a minute. If that were all there was to it, it would just be an everyday occurrence and hardly worth the trouble of telling. No, there is a lot more to Sister Aparición's case than that. Be patient and you shall hear it all."

"As a child, Irene had seen Juan de Camargo a thousand times without ever talking to him, because he was already a young man, and very aloof and withdrawn; he did not even have anything to do with the other lads in the village. When Irene was coming into flower, Camargo, an orphan, was already studying law in Salamanca, and he came to the village only to visit his guardian during vacations. One summer, as he was returning to A——, the student happened to look up at Irene's window and noticed the girl, who had her eyes fixed on him, eyes that could take the heart out of a man's breast, two black suns, for you've seen what they're still like. Camargo reined in his hired horse to drink his fill of that incredible beauty. But the girl, blushing like a poppy, drew back from the window and closed it with a bang. That same night Camargo, who had already begun to publish his verses in short-lived literary journals, wrote a beautiful poem describing the effect the sight of Irene had produced in him as he entered his village. And wrapping the paper on which it was written around a stone, when night had fallen he threw it at Irene's window. The glass broke, and the girl picked up the paper and read the poem, not once, but a hundred, a thousand times; she drank it in, steeped herself in it. Nevertheless, that poem, which is not included in Camargo's collected works, was not a



in the street, they greeted him warmly, for after all he came from home.

"Camargo, struck anew by the beauty of the girl, and noting that the sight of him brought the color back to her beautiful, pale cheeks, accompanied them and promised to come to visit them. The poor country mice were flattered by his attentions, and their satisfaction grew when they noticed that a few days later, when Camargo had fulfilled his promise, Irene began to revive. Unaware of the scandals that surrounded his name, it seemed to them that he might be a possible son-in-law, and they allowed him to repeat his visits.

"I can see by the expression on your face that you think you can guess the ending. You are mistaken. Irene, fascinated, beside herself as though she had drunk some magic philter, nevertheless for six months refused to visit Camargo in his home. The chaste resistance of the girl made him the butt of his friends' jokes, and pride, which is the poisoned root of certain romantic attitudes, such as those of Byron and Camargo, led him to make a bet, a satanic, diabolical revenge. He pleaded, he coaxed, he grew cold, he aroused her jealousy, he threatened suicide—in a word, he employed every snare until Irene, overpowered, finally agreed to the dangerous assignation. Thanks to a miracle of courage and decorum, she came away pure and unsullied, and Camargo was the victim of such jeers that he was beside himself with rage.

"At the second meeting Irene's powers were exhausted; her will bowed, and she succumbed. And when, confused and tremulous, she lay with closed eyes in the arms of her infamous lover, he, letting out a roar of laughter, pulled the cords of a curtain, and Irene saw eight or ten young men devouring her with lascivious eyes, while they laughed and clapped their hands ironically.

"Leaping to her feet, and without dressing herself, hair loose and shoulders bare, she plunged down the stairs and into the street. She reached her home followed by a crowd of street urchins, who flung stones and mud at her. She absolutely refused to say where she had been or what happened to her. My father heard about it because he happened to know one of those with whom Camarg



## THE SHADOW IN THE ROSE GARDEN

*by D. H. Lawrence*

*Without love, the world would indeed be a different place; certainly we would have had much less prose from D. H. Lawrence. The deepest urgings of sex interested him as they did few other writers; but Lawrence was always their master, not they his. This poignant drama of infidelity speaks eloquently of his understanding.*

A rather small young man sat by the window of a pretty seaside cottage trying to persuade himself that he was reading the newspaper. It was about half-past eight in the morning. Outside, the glory roses hung in the morning sunshine like little bowls of fire tipped up. The young man looked at the table, then at the clock, then at his own big silver watch. An expression of stiff endurance came on to his face. Then he rose and reflected on the oil paintings that hung on the walls of the room, giving careful but hostile attention to "The Stag at Bay." He tried the lid of the piano, and found it locked. He caught sight of his own face in a little mirror, pulled his brown moustache, and an alert interest sprang into his eyes. He was not ill-favored. He twisted his moustache. His figure was rather small, but alert and vigorous. As he turned from the mirror

a look of self-commiseration mingled with his appreciation of his own physiognomy.

In a state of self-suppression, he went through into the garden. His jacket, however, did not look dejected. It was new, and had a smart and self-confident air, sitting upon a confident body. He contemplated the Tree of Heaven that flourished by the lawn, then sauntered on to the next plant. There was more promise in a crooked apple tree covered with brown-red fruit. Glancing round, he broke off an apple and, with his back to the house, took a clean, sharp bite. To his surprise the fruit was sweet. He took another. Then again he turned to survey the bedroom windows overlooking the garden. He started, seeing a woman's figure; but it was only his wife. She was gazing across to the sea, apparently ignorant of him.

For a moment or two he looked at her, watching her. She was a good-looking woman, who seemed older than he, rather pale, but healthy, her face yearning. Her rich auburn hair was heaped in folds on her forehead. She looked apart from him and his world, gazing away to the sea. It irked her husband that she should continue abstracted and in ignorance of him; he pulled poppy fruits and threw them at the window. She started, glanced at him with a wild smile, and looked away again. Then almost immediately she left the window. He went indoors to meet her. She had a fine carriage, very proud, and wore a dress of soft white muslin.

"I've been waiting long enough," he said.

"For me or for breakfast?" she said lightly. "You know we said nine o'clock. I should have thought you could have slept after the journey."

"You know I'm always up at five, and I couldn't sleep in bed after six. You might as well be in the pit as in bed on a morning like this."

"I shouldn't have thought the pit would occur to you here."

She moved about examining the room, looking at the ornaments under glass covers. He, planted on the ~~heath~~ rug, watched her rather uneasily, and grudgingly ~~but~~. She shrugged her shoulders at the ~~apartment~~.

"Come," she said, taking his arm, "let us go ~~into~~ the garden till Mrs. Coates brings the tray."

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"I hope she'll be quick," he said, pulling his moustache. She gave a short laugh, and leaned on his arm as they went. He had lighted a pipe.

Mrs. Coates entered the room as they went down the steps. The delightful, erect old lady hastened to the window for a good view of her visitors. Her china-blue eyes were bright as she watched the young couple go down the path, he walking in an easy, confident fashion, with his wife on his arm. The landlady began talking to herself in a soft, Yorkshire accent.

"Just of a height they are. She wouldn't ha' married a man less than herself in stature, I think, though he's not her equal otherwise." Here her granddaughter came in, setting a tray on the table. The girl went to the old woman's side.

"He's been eating the apples, gran'," she said.

"Has he, my pet? Well, if he's happy, why not?"

Outside, the young, well-favored man listened with impatience to the chink of the teacups. At last, with a sigh of relief, the couple came into breakfast.

After he had eaten for some time, he rested a moment and said, "Do you think it's any better place than Bridlington?"

"I do," she said, "infinitely! Besides, I am at home here—it's not like a strange seaside place to me."

"How long were you here?"

"Two years."

He ate reflectively.

"I should ha' thought you'd rather go to a fresh place," he said at length.

She sat very silent, and then, delicately, put out a feeler.

"Why?" she said. "Do you think I shan't enjoy myself?"

He laughed comfortably, putting the marmalade thick on his bread.

"I hope so," he said.

She again took no notice of him.

"But don't say anything about it in the village, Frank," she said casually. "Don't say who I am, or that I used to live here. There's nobody I want to meet, particularly, and we should never feel free if they knew me again."

"Why did you come, then?"

"Why?" Can't you understand why?"

"Not if you don't want to know anybody."

"I came to see the place, not the people."

He did not say any more.

"Women," she said, "are different from men. I don't know why I wanted to come—but I did."

She helped him to another cup of coffee, solicitously.

"Only," she resumed, "don't talk about me in the village." She laughed shakily. "I don't want my past brought up against me, you know." And she moved the crumbs on the cloth with her fingertip.

He looked at her as he drank his coffee; he sucked his moustache, and putting down his cup, said phlegmatically:

"I'll bet you've had a lot of past."

She looked down with a little guiltiness, that flattered him, down at the tablecloth.

"Well," she said, caressive, "you won't give me away, who I am, will you?"

"No," he said, comforting, laughing, "I won't give you away."

He was pleased.

She remained silent. After a moment or two she lifted her head, saying, "I've got to arrange with Mrs. Coates, and do various things. So you'd better go out by yourself this morning—and we'll be in to dinner at one."

"But you can't be arranging with Mrs. Coates all morning," he said.

"Oh, well—then I've some letters to write, and I must get that mark out of my skirt. I've got plenty of little things to do this morning. You'd better go out by yourself."

He perceived that she wanted to be rid of him, so that when she went upstairs, he took his hat and lounged out on to the cliffs, suppressedly angry.

Presently she too came out. She wore a hat with roses, and a long lace scarf hung over her white dress. Rather nervously, she put up her sunshade, and her face was half-hidden in its colored shadow. She went along the narrow track of flagstones that were worn hollow by the feet of the fishermen. She seemed to be avoiding her surroundings, as if she remained safe in the little obscurity of her parasol.

She passed the church, and went down the lane till she

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came to a high wall by the wayside. Under this she went slowly, stopping at length by an open doorway, which shone like a picture of light in the dark wall. There in the magic beyond the doorway, patterns of shadow lay on the sunny court, on the blue and white sea-pebbles of its paving, while a green lawn glowed beyond, where a bay tree glittered at the edges. She tiptoed nervously into the courtyard, glancing at the house that stood in shadow. The uncurtained windows looked black and soulless, the kitchen door stood open. Irresolutely she took a step forward, and again forward, leaning, yearning, towards the garden beyond.

She had almost gained the corner of the house when a heavy step came crunching through the trees. A gardener appeared before her. He held a wicker tray on which were rolling great, dark red gooseberries, overripe. He moved slowly.

"The garden isn't open today," he said quietly to the attractive woman, who was poised for retreat.

For a moment she was silent with surprise. Why should it be public at all?

"When is it open?" she asked, quick-witted.

"The rector lets visitors in on Fridays and Tuesdays."

She stood still, reflecting. How strange to think of the rector opening his garden to the public!

"But everybody will be at church," she said coaxingly to the man. "There'll be nobody here, will there?"

He moved, and the big gooseberries rolled.

"The rector lives at the new rectory," he said.

The two stood still. He did not like to ask her to go. At last she turned to him with a winning smile.

"Might I have *one* peep at the roses?" she coaxed, with pretty wilfulness.

"I don't suppose it would matter," he said moving aside; "you won't stop long——"

She went forward, forgetting the gardener in a moment. Her face became strained, her movements eager. Glancing round, she saw all the windows giving on to the lawn were curtainless and dark. The house had a sterile appearance, as if it were still used, but not inhabited. A shadow seemed to go over her. She went across the lawn towards the garden, through an arch of crimson ramblers, a gate of

color. There beyond lay the soft blue sea within the bay, misty with morning, and the furthest headland of black rock jutting dimly out between blue and blue of the sky and water. Her face began to shine, transfigured with pain and joy. At her feet the garden fell steeply, all a confusion of flowers, and away below was the darkness of tree-tops covering the beck.

She turned to the garden that shone with sunny flowers around her. She knew the little corner where was the seat beneath the yew tree. Then there was the terrace where a great host of flowers shone, and from this, two paths went down, one at each side of the garden. She closed her sun-shade and walked slowly among the many flowers. All round were rose bushes, big banks of roses, then roses hanging and tumbling from pillars, or roses balanced on the standard bushes. By the open earth were many other flowers. If she lifted her head, the sea was upraised beyond, and the Cape.

Slowly she went down one path, lingering, like one who has gone back into the past. Suddenly she was touching some heavy crimson roses that were as soft as velvet, touching them thoughtfully, without knowing, as a mother sometimes fondles the hand of her child. She leaned slightly forward to catch the scent. Then she wandered on in abstraction. Sometimes a flame-colored, scentless rose would hold her arrested. She stood gazing at it as if she could not understand it. Again the same softness of intimacy came over her, as she stood before a tumbling heap of pink petals. Then she wondered over the white rose, that was greenish, like ice, in the center. So, slowly, like a white, pathetic butterfly, she drifted down the path, coming at last to a tiny terrace all full of roses. They seemed to fill the place, a sunny, gay throng. She was shy of them, they were so many and so bright. They seemed to be conversing and laughing. She felt herself in a strange crowd. It exhilarated her, carried her out of herself. She flushed with excitement. The air was pure scent.

Hastily, she went to a little seat among the white roses, and sat down. Her scarlet sunshade made a hard blot of color. She sat quite still, feeling her own existence lapse. She was no more than a rose, a rose that could not quite

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come into blossom, but remained tense. A little fly dropped on her knee, on her white dress. She watched it, as if it had fallen on a rose. She was not herself.

Then she started cruelly as a shadow crossed her and a figure moved into her sight. It was a man who had come in slippers, unheard. He wore a linen coat. The morning was shattered, the spell vanished away. She was only afraid of being questioned. He came forward. She rose. Then, seeing him, the strength went from her and she sank on the seat again.

He was a young man, military in appearance, growing slightly stout. His black hair was brushed smooth and bright, his moustache was waxed. But there was something rambling in his gait. She looked up, blanched to the lips, and saw his eyes. They were black, and stared without seeing. They were not a man's eyes. He was coming towards her.

He stared at her fixedly, made an unconscious salute, and sat down beside her on the seat. He moved on the bench, shifted his feet, saying, in a gentlemanly, military voice, "I don't disturb you—do I?"

She was mute and helpless. He was scrupulously dressed in dark clothes and a linen coat. She could not move. Seeing his hands, with the ring she knew so well upon the little finger, she felt as if she were going dazed. The whole world was deranged. She sat unavailing. For his hands, her symbols of passionate love, filled her with horror as they rested now on his strong thighs.

"May I smoke?" he asked intimately, almost secretly, his hand going to his pocket.

She could not answer, but it did not matter, he was in another world. She wondered, craving, if he recognized her—if he could recognize her. She sat pale with anguish. But she had to go through with it.

"I haven't got any tobacco," he said thoughtfully.

But she paid no heed to his words, only she attended to him. Could he recognize her, or was it all gone? She sat still in a frozen kind of suspense.

"I smoke John Cotton," he said, "and I must economize with it, it is expensive. You know, I'm not very well off while these lawsuits are going on."

"No," she said, and her heart was cold, her soul kept rigid.

He moved, made a loose salute, rose, and went away. She sat motionless. She could see his shape, the shape she had loved with all her passion: his compact, soldier's head, his fine figure now slackened. And it was not he. It only filled her with horror too difficult to know.

Suddenly he came again, his hand in his jacket pocket.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he said. "Perhaps I shall be able to see things more clearly."

He sat down beside her again, filling a pipe. She watched his hands with the fine strong fingers. They had always inclined to tremble slightly. It had surprised her, long ago, in such a healthy man. Now they moved inaccurately, and the tobacco hung raggedly out of the pipe.

"I have legal business to attend to. Legal affairs are always so uncertain. I tell my solicitor exactly, precisely what I want, but I can never get it done."

She sat and heard him talking. But it was not he. Yet those were the hands she had kissed, there were the glistening, strange black eyes that she had loved. Yet it was not he. She sat motionless with horror and silence. He dropped his tobacco pouch, and groped for it on the ground. Yet she must wait to see if he would recognize her. Why could she not go! In a moment he rose.

"I must go at once," he said. "The owl is coming." Then he added confidentially, "His name isn't really the owl, but I call him that. I must go and see if he has come."

She rose too. He stood before her, uncertain. He was a handsome, soldierly fellow, and a lunatic. Her eyes searched him, and searched him, to see if he would recognize her, if she could discover him.

"You don't know me?" she asked, from the terror of her soul, standing alone.

He looked back at her quizzically. She had to bear his eyes. They gleamed on her, but with no intelligence. He was drawing nearer to her.

"Yes, I do know you," he said, fixed, intent, but mad. drawing his face nearer hers. Her horror was too great. The powerful lunatic was coming too near to her.

A man approached, hastening.

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"The garden isn't open this morning," he said.

The deranged man stopped and looked at him. The keeper went to the seat and picked up the tobacco pouch left lying there.

"Don't leave your tobacco, sir," he said, taking it to the gentleman in the linen coat.

"I was just asking this lady to stay to lunch," the latter said politely. "She is a friend of mine."

The woman turned and walked swiftly, blindly, between the sunny roses, out from the garden, past the house with the blank, dark windows, through the sea-pebbled courtyard to the street. Hastening and blind, she went forward without hesitating, not knowing whither. Directly she came to the house she went upstairs, took off her hat, and sat down on the bed. It was as if some membrane had been torn in two in her, so that she was not an entity that could think and feel. She sat staring across at the window, where an ivy spray waved slowly up and down in the sea wind. There was some of the uncanny luminousness of the sunlit sea in the air. She sat perfectly still, without any being. She only felt she might be sick, and it might be blood that was loose in her torn entrails. She sat perfectly still and passive.

After a time she heard the hard tread of her husband on the floor below, and, without herself changing, she registered his movement. She heard his rather disconsolate footsteps go out again, then his voice speaking, answering, growing cheery, and his solid tread drawing near.

He entered, ruddy, rather pleased, an air of complacency about his alert, sturdy figure. She moved stiffly. He faltered in his approach.

"What's the matter?" he asked, a tinge of impatience in his voice. "Aren't you feeling well?"

This was torture to her.

"Quite," she replied.

His brown eyes became puzzled and angry.

"What is the matter?" he said.

"Nothing."

He took a few strides, and stood obstinately, looking out of the window.

"Have you run up against anybody?" he asked.

"Nobody who knows me," she said.

His hands began to twitch. It exasperated him, that she was no more sensible of him than if he did not exist. Turning on her at length, driven, he asked, "Something has upset you, hasn't it?"

"No, why?" she said, neutral. He did not exist for her, except as an irritant.

His anger rose, filling the veins in his throat.

"It seems like it," he said, making an effort not to show his anger, because there seemed no reason for it. He went away downstairs. She sat still on the bed, and with the residue of feeling left to her, she disliked him because he tormented her. The time went by. She could smell the dinner being served, the smoke of her husband's pipe from the garden. But she could not move. She had no being. There was a tinkle of the bell. She heard him come indoors. And then he mounted the stairs again. At every step her heart grew tight in her. He opened the door.

"Dinner is on the table," he said.

It was difficult for her to endure his presence, for he would interfere with her. She could not recover her life. She rose stiffly and went down. She could neither eat nor talk during the meal. She sat absent, torn with the thought of her own. He tried to go on as if nothing were the matter. But at last he became silent with fury. As soon as it was possible, she went upstairs again and locked the bedroom door. She must be alone. He went out into the garden. All his suppressed anger against her held herself superior to him filled and overflowed him. Though he had not known it, yet he had never been in love with her, she had never loved him. She had been in defiance. This had foiled him. He was only a ~~little~~ ~~old~~ ~~doctor~~ ~~physician~~ in the mine, she was superior to him. He had always given way to her. But all the while he had been working in his soul because he did not understand seriously. And now all his rage was against her.

He turned and went indoors. The first time, she heard him mounting the stairs. Her heart stood still. He caught the catch and pushed the door. She locked it again, harder. Her heart was thumping still.

"Have you fastened the door?" he asked quietly, ~~when~~ ~~now~~ of the landlady.

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"Yes. Wait a minute."

She rose and turned the lock, afraid he would burst it. She felt hatred towards him, because he did not leave her free. He entered, his pipe between his teeth, and she returned to her old position on the bed. He closed the door and stood with his back to it.

"What's the matter?" he asked determinedly.

She was sick with him. She could not look at him.

"Can't you leave me alone?" she replied, averting her face from him.

He looked at her quickly, fully, wincing with ignominy. Then he seemed to consider for a moment.

"There's something up with you, isn't there?" he asked definitely.

"Yes," she said, "but that's no reason why you should torment me."

"I don't torment you. What's the matter?"

"Why should you know?" she cried, in hate and desperation.

Something snapped. He started and caught his pipe as it fell from his mouth. Then he pushed forward the bitten-off mouthpiece with his tongue, took it from off his lips, and looked at it. Then he put out his pipe, and brushed the ash from his waistcoat. After which he raised his head.

"I want to know," he said. His face was greyish pale, and set ugly.

Neither looked at the other. She knew he was fired now. His heart was pounding heavily. She hated him, but she could not withstand him. Suddenly she lifted her head and turned on him.

"What right have you to know?" she asked.

He looked at her. She felt a pang of surprise for his tortured eyes and his fixed face. But her heart hardened swiftly. She had never loved him. She did not love him now.

But suddenly she lifted her head again swiftly, like a thing that tries to get free. She wanted to be free of it. It was not him so much, but it, something she had put on herself, that bound her so horribly. And having put the bond on herself, it was hardest to take it off. But now she hated everything and felt destructive. He stood with his back to the door, fixed, as if he would oppose her eternally,

till she was extinguished. She looked at him. Her eyes were cold and hostile. His workman's hands spread on the panels of the door behind him.

"You know I used to live here?" she began, in a hard voice, as if wilfully to wound him. He braced himself against her, and nodded.

"Well, I was companion to Miss Birch of Torril Hall—she and the rector were friends, and Archie was the rector's son." There was a pause. He listened without knowing what was happening. He stared at his wife. She was squatted in her white dress on the bed, carefully folding and re-folding the hem of her skirt. Her voice was full of hostility.

"He was an officer—a sub-lieutenant—then he quarrelled with his colonel and came out of the army. At any rate"—she plucked at her skirt hem, her husband stood motionless, watching her movements which filled his veins with madness—"he was awfully fond of me, and I was of him—awfully."

"How old was he?" asked the husband.

"When—when I first knew him? Or when he went away?—"

"When you first knew him."

"When I first knew him, he was twenty-six—now—he's thirty-one—nearly thirty-two—because I'm twenty-nine, and he is nearly three years older—"

She lifted her head and looked at the opposite wall.

"And what then?" said her husband.

She hardened herself, and said callously, "We were as good as engaged for nearly a year, though nobody knew—at least—they talked—but—it wasn't open. Then he went away—"

"He chucked you?" said the husband brutally, wanting to hurt her into contact with himself. Her heart rose wildly with rage. Then "Yes," she said, to anger him. He shifted from one foot to the other, giving a "Ph!" of rage. There was silence for a time.

"Then," she resumed, her pain giving a mocking note to her words, "he suddenly went out to fight in Africa, and almost the very day I first met you, I heard from Miss

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Birch he'd got sunstroke—and two months after, that he was dead——"

"That was before you took on with me?" said the husband.

There was no answer. Neither spoke for a time. He had not understood. His eyes were contracted ugly.

"So you've been looking at your old courting places!" he said. "That was what you wanted to go out by yourself for this morning."

Still she did not answer him anything. He went away from the door to the window. He stood with his hands behind him, his back to her. She looked at him. His hands seemed gross to her, the back of his head paltry.

At length, almost against his will, he turned round, asking, "How long were you carrying on with him?"

"What do you mean?" she replied coldly.

"I mean how long were you carrying on with him?"

She lifted her head, averting her face from him. She refused to answer. Then she said, "I don't know what you mean, by carrying on. I loved him from the first days I met him—two months after I went to stay with Miss Birch."

"And do you reckon he loved you?" he jeered.

"I know he did."

"How do you know, if he'd have no more to do with you?"

There was a long silence of hate and suffering.

"And how far did it go between you?" he asked at length, in a frightened, stiff voice.

"I hate your not-straightforward questions," she cried, beside herself with his baiting. "We loved each other, and we were lovers—we were. I don't care what *you* think: what have you got to do with it? We were lovers before ever I knew you——"

"Lovers—lovers," he said, white with fury. "You mean you had your fling with an army man, and then came to me to marry you when you'd done——"

She sat swallowing her bitterness. There was a long pause.

"Do you mean to say you used to go—the whole hogger?" he asked, still incredulous.

"Why, what else do you think I mean?" she cried brutally.

He shrank, and became white, impersonal. There was a long, paralyzed silence. He seemed to have gone small.

"You never thought to tell me all this before I married you," he said, with bitter irony, at last.

"You never asked me," she replied.

"I never thought there was any need."

"Well, then, you *should* think."

He stood with expressionless, almost childlike set face, revolving many thoughts, while his heart was mad with anguish.

Suddenly she added, "And I saw him today," she said. "He is not dead, he's mad."

Her husband looked at her, startled.

"Mad!" he said involuntarily.

"A lunatic," she said. It almost cost her her reason to utter the word. There was a pause.

"Did he know you?" asked the husband, in a small voice.

"No," she said.

He stood and looked at her. At last he had learned the width of the breach between them. She still squatted on the bed. He could not go near her. It would be violation to each of them to be brought into contact with the other. The thing must work itself out. They were both shocked so much, they were impersonal, and no longer hated each other. After some minutes he left her and went out.

## MARTHE

*by J. K. Huysmans'*

*Huysmans is to the underworld of love what the moon is to the sun—the reflector of its nights. And his story of Marthe's fall to the lowest abyss is nothing more or less than what any serious portrayal of such tragedy must be—the truth.*

After ten years of sterile struggles and miseries impatiently borne, Sébastien Landousé, a painter, had at the moment he was beginning to be known by the public, married one Florence Herbier, a worker in imitation pearls. Unfortunately, his health, already shaken by amours and by excessive labors, grew steadily worse from day to day, until, after a malady of the lungs, which kept him flat on his back in bed for six long months, he ended by dying and was buried, for lack of money, in a corner of the potter's field.

Apathetic and weak by temperament, his wife bore up under the blow and went valiantly to work, and when Marthe, his daughter, had attained her fifteenth year and completed her apprenticeship, the mother, in turn, died, and, like her husband, found a chance grave in a cemetery.

Marthe was then earning, as a worker in imitation pearls, a salary of four francs a day, but the trade was an exhausting and unhealthy one, and sometimes she was unable to work at it.

Imitation pearls are made from the scales of the ablet, pounded and reduced to a sort of paste, which a workman stirs incessantly. The water, the alkali and the scales of the fish are all unsanitary and become a seat of infection when the least heat is present, and so this paste is prepared in a cellar. The older it is, the more precious it is. It is put up in flagons, carefully sealed, and the bath of ammonia and water is renewed from time to time.

As in certain wine-shops, the bottles bear an indication of the year in which they were filled; like the vintage of September, this glittering vintage improves with time. In the absence of labels, one might recognize the young flagons from the older ones by the fact that the former appear to be plated in silver-gray, while the others are laminated with quicksilver. Once this composition is sufficiently dense and sufficiently homogeneous, the worker, with the aid of a blow-pipe, must breathe it into globules of glass, round or oval in shape, in the form of balls or pears, according to the form of the pearl, washing the whole with spirits of wine, which she likewise breathes in with her blow-pipe. The object of this operation is to dry the glazing; there is nothing to do then, in order to give weight and preserve the foil of the glass, except to drip upon the pearl a few tears of virgin wax. If its water is well silvered with gray, if it is merely what the manufacturer calls a medium article, it is worth, such as it is, from three francs to three francs fifty.

Marthe passed her days in filling these balls, and of an evening, when her task was finished, she would go to Mont-rouge, to the home of her mother's brother, a lute-maker, or she would return to her own lodging and, frozen by the cold of the desolate place, would go to bed as quickly as possible, endeavoring to slay, by means of sleep, the melancholy of the long light nights.

She was, otherwise, a singular girl. Strange ardors: a disgust for her trade; a hatred of misery; an unhealthy aspiration towards the unknown; a despair that was not resignation; the poignant memory of evil days, days without bread, by the bedside of her sick father, along with the conviction, born of the rancors of a disdained artist, that protection, acquired at the price of all sorts of baseness

and niggardliness, is all there is here below; an appetite for well-being and for pomp; a morbid languor; a disposition to neurasthenia, which she inherited from her father; a certain instinctive laziness, which she got from her mother, who was so fine in critical moments, so weak when necessity no longer gripped her. All these qualities and pre-dispositions swarmed and gushed, furiously, within her.

The workshop, unfortunately, was not adapted to strengthening her hard-pressed courage or to relieving virtue in distress.

A workshop of women is the anteroom of Saint-Lazare. Marthe was not slow in becoming accustomed to the conversation of her companions. Bent all day long over a bowl of scales, between the blowing of two pearls, they could chatter endlessly. To tell the truth, their conversation varied but little. Always, it revolved about a man. Such and such a girl was living with a gentleman, who was very well-to-do; she received so much a month, and all proceeded to admire her new medallion, her rings, her earrings; all were jealous of her and brought pressure to bear upon their own lovers to provide them with similar trifles. A girl is lost as soon as she sees other girls of this sort. The conversations of schoolboys are not to be compared with those of workwomen; the workshop is a touchstone of the virtues; gold there is rare, brass is abundant. A girl does not stumble, as the novelists say, from love, through a bewilderment of the senses, but, rather, through pride and, to a degree, through curiosity.

Marthe listened to the exploits of her girlfriends, to tales of their gentle and deadly combats, with wide eyes and a mouth that burned with fever. The others laughed at her and had nicknamed her "the little canary." To hear them, all men were perfect idiots! One girl had made a fool of a man the night before and had kept him waiting for an appointment; he had only been the hungrier for her. Another was trifling on her lover, who loved her the more, the less faithful she was. All deceived their hangers-on, or spun them around like tops, and all gloried in the fact! Marthe, already, no longer blushed at the smutty remarks which she heard all about her; she blushed, instead, at not being the equal of her companions in arrogance. She no longer hesi-

tated to give herself; she was merely waiting a propitious occasion. Moreover, the life that she was leading was unbearable to her. Never to laugh! Nor to be amused! Never to have any distraction, except such as she might find in her uncle's house, a hut that was rented by the week, where uncle, aunt, children, dogs and cats piled in pell-mell. Of an evening, they played lotto, that ideally stupid game, and marked the winning fives with trouser-buttons. On fête days they would drink a glass of warm wine between games, and sometimes they would shell roasted chestnuts. These joys of the poor exasperated her, and she preferred to go to the house of one of her girlfriends, who was living in concubinage with a man. But both of them were young and never grew tired of kissing each other. The situation of a third party in such duets is always ridiculous, and so she would leave them more saddened and provoked than ever! Oh! She had had enough of this solitary life, of this eternal Tantalus-like punishment, of this invincible prurience for caresses and for gold! She must put an end to it, and she began to reflect how she should set about it. She was followed every evening by an elderly man, who promised her all sorts of marvels, while a young man, who lived in the same house on the floor above, would brush past her on the staircase and gently beg pardon, when his ~~had~~ happened to graze her own. Her choice was not in doubt. The old man won the day on the scales of her heart, ~~saying~~ that the young one had nothing to throw in except his good looks and his youth, while the other tossed on the scales the sword of Brennus; well-being and gold! He had also given him a certain tone, as of a well-bred man, ~~which~~ to the young girl, for the reason that her ~~companions~~ ~~had~~ no lovers none but boors, counter-jumpers or ~~bad~~ ~~bad~~. She yielded . . . having no other excuse than ~~these~~ ~~these~~ ~~passions which make one cry out with pain and~~ one, finally, to abandon body and soul . . . ~~she~~ ~~she~~ ~~she~~ was profoundly disgusted.

The following day, nevertheless, ~~she~~ ~~she~~ ~~she~~ trades the story of her ruin, ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ But she put on an appearance of ~~being~~ ~~being~~ ~~being~~ ~~ess and, in the presence of the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ arm of the old blackguard ~~she~~ ~~she~~ ~~she~~

courage was not of long duration; her nerves rebelled; and one evening, she showed the old man and his money the door and resolved to resume her former mode of life. It is the story of those who are habitual smokers and who, sick with disgust, swear that they will never begin again, but who do begin again as soon as their stomachs consent to be over-ruled. After one pipe another; after one lover a second.

This time, she wanted to love a young man, as though that were something she could direct to her liking! That one young fellow did love her . . . almost, but he was so gentle and so respectful that she took a pleasure in making him suffer. They ended in separating, by common accord. Oh! Then she did like the others: one week, three days, two days, one day satiated her, in turn, with the weight of importunate caresses. In the meantime, she fell ill, and, as soon as she was well again, was abandoned by her lover. To crown her misfortunes, the physician expressly ordered her not to continue her trade of pearl-blower. What was she to do, then? What was to become of her? She was in want, want all the more oppressive by reason of the good times she remembered having had with her first man, a memory that incessantly came back to her.

She tried her luck in other professions, but the low salaries which she was paid dissuaded her from fresh efforts. One fine evening, hunger rolled her in the mud of the gutter; and she sprawled there at full length and never rose again.

From then on, she went downstream, eating as best she could on her chance earnings, suffering from hunger when the north wind whistled. She had finished her apprenticeship in this new trade; she had passed as a vassal into the hands of the first comer; she had become a worker in human passions.

One evening, she met, in a dance hall, where she had gone to seek her fortune in the company of a big trollop with a dumpy figure and eyes the color of sienna, a young man, who appeared to be in quest of adventure. Marthe, with her currant-red mouth, her cajoling little pout when he teased her, her general air of a barroom goddess and her languishing but inflaming glance, completely won this

naïve lad, and took him home with her. This accident soon became a habit. They even ended by living together. Driven from cheap lodginghouse to cheap lodginghouse, they finally took refuge in a frightful hole, situated in the Rue du Cherche-Midi.

This house had all the appearance of a den. A rusty door, zebra-striped with beef-blood and ochre, a long dark corridor, the walls of which oozed drops as black as coffee, a weird stair, which cried out under every imprint of foot, heavy with the unclean scents of sinks and the odor of latrines, the doors of which fanned in every breeze. It was on the third floor of this dwelling that they selected a room with a flowered wall paper, frayed in spots and dropping, through other spots, a fine rain of plaster. In this room there were not even the usual vases in alabaster and painted porcelain, the clock without hands, the fly-specked mirror; there was not even that last luxury of furnished rooms, the colored engravings of Napoleon, wounded in the foot and remounting his horse; the dismantled walls urinated little yellow drops, and the floor, with its scarlet-varnished slabs, was like a sickly skin mottled with red eruptions. The only furniture was a dirty wooden bed, a table without a drawer, chintz curtains, coal-black and stiff with accumulated filth, a chair without a bottom and an old armchair, which rejoiced by itself over by the chimney, smiling through all its crevices and protruding, as though to beard the world, its tongues of black horsehair through all the chinks of its velvet chops.

They stayed there for eight weeks, living by one expedient or another, eating and drinking indescribable things. Marthe was beginning to long for another lot, when she discovered that she was a number of months pregnant. She burst into tears, confessed to her lover that the child was not his, told him that she would give him his liberty and, by this stratagem, succeeded in attaching him to her, hopelessly. She made an agreement with the poor wretch that they should deprive themselves of all unnecessary things in order to be able to lay aside the sum needed for her accouchement.

But they were spared the trouble. A fall on the stair accelerated her delivery. One clear night in December, when

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they had not a sou, neither one nor the other of them, she felt the first pangs of childbirth. The young fellow dashed precipitately out of doors, in quest of a midwife, whom he soon brought back with him.

"But you're freezing here!" cried this Providence in a bonnet, as she entered the room. "We must light a fire."

Fearing that, if this woman divined their misery, she would demand her fee in advance, Marthe told her lover to go look for the key to the wood cellar—it must be in the pocket of her dress or on the mantelpiece. Her lover was so stupefied that he was on the point of searching for this mythical key in earnest, when Marthe suddenly grew stiff, gave a long drawn out groan and fell back, white and inert, upon the pallet! She had just given birth to a little daughter!

The midwife cleaned the infant, wrapped it up and went away, announcing that she would come back the next morning at daybreak.

The night was unbelievably melancholy. The girl groaned and complained of not being able to sleep; the lad, dying with cold, sat in the armchair and rocked the brat, which wailed in a lamentable fashion. About three o'clock, the snow began falling, and the wind bellowed in the corridor, shaking the loose windows, buffeting the candle, which dripped forlornly, and blowing ashes from the grate about the room. The infant was frozen and hungry. As a crowning misfortune, its swaddling clothes slipped off and, rendered clumsy by the icy squalls which froze his hands, the young fellow could not succeed in getting them on again. As a last trivially horrible detail, this fireless room made him sick, the poor little thing crying louder and louder as he ceased to rock it.

The result of this evening was, both the child and the man died, the one of cold and exposure, the other of a peerless dropsy, which the experience of the night had hastened. The girl alone emerged, fresher and more enticing than ever. She lived for some time by what she could pick up at street corners, until one night when, discouraged and unable to find any longer the mire in which to gain her bread, she happened to meet an old-time comrade of the factory. The latter had had no need to strike a reef; she had foundered in the open sea, body and cargo. This in-

cident decided Marthe's fate. The other boasted of the profits she was making in her new way of life. Marthe drank two glasses too many, accompanied her friend to the entrance of the lair and hazarded a foot inside, believing that she would be able to retrace her steps whenever it seemed good to her.

The following day, she had become the recognized inmate of a house of prostitution.

## BOY WITH A TRUMPET

*by Rhys Davies*

*The inability to love—man's desolation—is a theme which had pervaded contemporary literature. Here, in the most "modern" of possible terms, and with a truly remarkable Freudian twist, Rhys Davies shows the desperation to which it must lead.*

All he wanted was a bed, a shelf for his trumpet and permission to play it. He did not care how squalid the room, though he was so clean and shining himself; he could afford only the lowest rent. Not having any possessions except what he stood up in, the trumpet in an elegant case and a paper parcel of shirts and socks, landladies were suspicious of him. But he so gleamed with light young vigour, like a feather in the wind, that he kindled even in those wary hearts less harsh refusals.

Finally, on the outer rim of the West End, he found a bleak room for eight shillings a week in the house of a faded actress purply with drink and the dramas of a succession of lovers.

"I don't mind a trumpet," she said, mollified by his air of a waif strayed out of a lonely vacancy. "Are you in the orchestra, dear? No? You're not in a jazz band, are you? I can't have nightclub people in my house, coming in at all hours. No? . . . You look so young," she said wonder-

ingly. "Well, there's no attendance, my charwoman is on war work; the bathroom is strictly engaged every morning from ten to half-past, and I do not allow tenants to receive visitors of the opposite sex in their rooms." Behind the blowsiness were the remnants of one who had often played the role of a lady.

"I've just committed suicide," he said naïvely. She saw then the bright but withdrawn fixity of his eyes, single-purposed.

"What!" she said, flurried in her kimono, and instinctively placed a stagey hand on her bosom.

"They got me back," he said. "I was sick. I didn't swallow enough of the stuff. Afterwards they sent me to a—well, a hospital. Then they discharged me. From the army."

"Oh, dear!" she fussed. And, amply and yearning, "Did your nerve go, then? . . . Haven't you any people?" There had been a suicide—a successful one—in her house before, and she had not been averse to the tragedy.

"I have God," he said gravely. "I was brought up in an orphanage. But I have an aunt in Chester. She and I do not love each other. I don't like violence. The telephone is ringing," he said, with his alert but withdrawn awareness.

She scolded someone, at length, and with high-spirited emphasis, and returned muttering; she started to find him still under the huge frilled lampshade by the geraniums. "Rent is in advance," she said mechanically. "Number eight—~~the~~—"

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lips, as the bandmaster of his regiment had told him, were not suitable for a trumpet; they had not the necessary full, fleshy contours, and also there were interstices in his front teeth; his face became horribly contracted in his effort to blast "Cherry Ripe" out of the silver instrument. Nevertheless, when the benevolent spinster in the cathedral town where he had been stationed and sung Elizabethan madrigals asked what she could buy him after he had left the asylum, he said, "A trumpet." And, alone, he had come to the great city with his neurosis and a gleaming second hand trumpet costing sixteen guineas. On arrival he spent half his money on four expensive poplin shirts and in the evening went to a lecture on world reform; the night he had spent in Regent's Park, his trumpet case and parrot on his lap.

The landlady rapped and came in. Violet circles were painted round her eyes and her hair was greenish. With a wrap large, loose breasts swam untrammeled as dolphins. She looked at him with a speculative doubt.

"It's very noisy. Are you practicing? There are neighbors."

"You said I could play my trumpet," he pointed out gravely.

She said, "I am artistic myself, and I have had actors, writers, and musicians in my house. But there's a limit. You must have a certain hour for practice. But not in the evenings; the mornings are more suitable for a trumpet."

"I cannot get up in the mornings," he said. The trim, fixed decision of the young soldier stiffened his voice. "I need a great deal of sleep."

"Are you still ill?" She stepped forward, her ringed hands outstretched. He sat on the bed's edge in his clean new shirt, the trumpet across his knees. From him came a desolate waif need. But his round, fresh-air face had blank imperviousness, and down his indrawn small eyes flickered a secret repudiation. "Are you lonely?" she went on. "I play the piano."

"I don't like trembling young girls," he said. But as if to himself, "They make me unhappy. I usually burst into crying when I'm with them. But I like babies; I want to be a father. I used to go into the married quarters in ba-

ks and look after babies. Sometimes," he said, with his  
ive simplicity, "I used to wash their napkins." In her slovenly fashion she was arrantly good-natured and friendly. "Did you have a bad time in the orphanage, sir?"

"No, not *bad*. But I cannot stand the smell of carbolic up now: it makes me want to vomit. I would like," he ded, "to have known my mother. Or my father."

"Hasn't anyone ever cared for you?" she asked, heavily.

"Yes. Both girls and men. But only for short periods." Touched, he spoke as if he would never question the reason for this. The antiseptic austerity of his early years closed him like a cell of white marble; later there had been a forced, too early physical maturity of the army, which the orphanage governor had induced him to join as a findsboy, just before the war. He had no instinctive love to give out in return for attempts of affection. It had never been born in him. "People get tired of me," he added, quite perceptibly.

After that, in her erratic fashion, he obsessed her. She occasionally fed him; in his room she put cushions and a large oleograph of Dante and Beatrice on a Florence ledge; she even allowed him to play the trumpet when he liked, despite complaints from the other lodgers. She urged her lover of the moment, an irate designer of textiles, to find him a job in the studio of the huge West End store. But the boy categorically refused all jobs that required him before noon. His head like an apple on the plow, he lay in bed all the morning sunk in profoundumber.

In the afternoons he would sit at his window drinking tea or earnestly reading a modern treatise on religious problems. He insisted to her that a fresh upsurge of religious awareness was about to arrive in the world. He had already passed through the hands of a hearty, up-to-date Christian group, and he corresponded regularly with a canon whose sole panacea, however, was an exhortation to pray.

"But I can't pray," he grieved to her. There was a deadlock of all his faculties.

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Only when playing his trumpet he seemed a little released. Harshly and without melodic calm, he blew over a world in chaos. For all the contortions of his round face he bloomed into a kind of satisfaction as he created a hideous pattern of noise. Cast out of the army as totally unfit for service, it was only in these blasts of noise that he really enjoyed his liberty—the first that had ever come to him.

"Your rent is a fortnight overdue," she reminded him with prudent urgency. "You really must find work, dear. Think of your future; now is your opportunity, with so many jobs about."

"What future?" he asked curiously. "Why do you believe so confidently in the future?"

He could always deflate her with this grave flatness. But her habit of working up emotional scenes was not easily baulked. She would call him into her sitting room and, stroking his hand, among the billowy cushions, heat and throb about the rudeness of her lover, who was younger than herself. "We are two waifs," she said, while the telephone concealed under the crinoline of a doll rang again.

But he did not want the sultry maternalness of the faded, artificial woman; unerringly he sensed the shallow predatory egotism of her need. Yet neither did he want to know the two beautiful and serious girls, flaxen-haired and virginal, who lived on the same floor; he always ducked his head away from them. He wanted to pick up a prostitute and spend a furtive quarter of an hour with her in the blackout. But he could not afford this. He was destitute now.

"You are horrible," she exclaimed angrily when, in long talk, he told her of this. "You, a boy of nineteen wanting to go with prostitutes!"

"You see," he insisted, "I would feel myself master with them, and I can hate them, too. But with nice, proud girls I cannot stop myself breaking down, and then I want to rush away and throw myself under a tube train. . . . An that's bad for me," he added, with that earnest naivete of his.



She heaved over him in the narrow room, a dramatic mænad gone to copious seed and smelling of bath salts.

He got up from the bed's edge, carefully disconnected the trumpet's pieces and put them in the elegant case and his shirts and socks into a brown paper carrier. She watched him, spellbound; his crisp, deliberate decision was curbing. At the door he raised his hat politely. All recognition of her was abolished from the small, unswerving eyes.

"Good afternoon," he said in a precise way. "I will send you the rent when I earn some money. I am sure to find a position suited to me before long."

He stored the trumpet in a railway station. On no account would he pawn it, though there was only a shilling or two left of the pound the canon had last sent him, together with a copy of *St. Augustine's Confessions*. He knew it was useless to look for a job even as second trumpet in the cabarets; not even his fresh, shiny, boy appearance that would look well in a Palm Beach jacket, could help him.

That night he hung about the dark, chattering Circus, no unhappy, feeling vaguely liberated among this anonymous crowd milling about in an atmosphere of drink, flesh, and boredom. He listened carefully to the soldiers' smudged catcalls, the female retaliations, the whispers, the ironical endearments, the dismissals. But as the night wore on and the crowd thinned, his senses became sharpened, alert, and at the same time desperate. Like a young hungry wolf sniffing the edge of the dark, he howled desolately inside himself. In the blackout the perfumed women, dots of fire between their fingertips, passed and repassed, as if weaving a dance figure in some hieratic ceremony; his mind became aware of a pattern, a design, a theme in which a restated lewd note grew ever more and more dominant. He wanted to play his trumpet. Startle the night with a barbaric blast.

He began to accost the women. He had heard that some would give shelter to the temporarily destitute, exercising a legendary comradeship of the streets. But none had use for him. After a brief assessment of his conversation they passed on rapidly. Only one was disposed to chatter. She



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cue, rousing the stage manager to threats of instant dismissal, despite the labour shortage. The hard-working young dancers, lustrously trim and absorbed in professional perfection, took no notice of the new stagehand fascinated in attempts to adapt their integrated patterns to his consciousness. But though hypnotized by this new revelation of idealized flesh and movements, he still could not identify himself with them. He was still cut off, he had not yet come through to acceptance that the world breathed, and that these pink and silver girls actually could be touched.

He started and listened carefully when a distinguished young man, a hero of the sky, sent a message backstage that he "would like to collaborate" with a certain starry beauty of the chorus. "She'll collaborate all right," remarked another of the girls in the wings; "I never heard it called that before." That night he went home straight from the theatre and filled the house with the blasts of his trumpet.

He had rented a small partitioned space in the basement, its window overlooking the back garden. It contained a camp bed and one or two bugs which he accepted as outcomes of the God-force. The street was not of good repute, but it was beyond the West End, and an amount of lace-curtained and fumed-oak-respectability was maintained.

"You can blow your trumpet as much as you like," Irish Lil said. "Blow it in the middle of the night if you like—it might drive some of the bastards out. Can you lend me five bob till tomorrow morning?"

There had been a quarrel among the five prostitutes upstairs: four accused the fifth of bringing in clients during the daytime—they declared the house would get a bad name. They were entirely daughters of the night; in daylight there was a moon glisten on their waxen faces, their hair looked unreal, and their voices were huskily fretful. They called him the Boy with a Trumpet, and he was already something of a pet among them. He shared the oomy basement with four refugees off the Continent who came and went on obscure errands and everlasting cooked cabbage soup.

Irish Lil was the disgrace of the house. Though she al-

ways had real flowers stuck in the two milk bottles on her sideboard, she was a slut. Her slovenly make-up, her regular Q.M.S. lover in the Guards who got roaring drunk, and her inability to discriminate and to insist on pre-payment angered the four younger women. Blond Joyce carried on a year-old vendetta with her. Over a stolen egg. Irish Lil was creeping downstairs one evening with the egg, which she had taken from Joyce's room, when a bomb fell in the avenue. Kathleen rushed out of her room with a Free French client and found Lil struck daft on the stairs with the crushed egg dribbling through her fingers.

"Don't trust your trumpet to her," Joyce said. "She'll pawn it." For, as his room had no lock, he asked where in the house he could hide his trumpet while he was at the theatre.

"She weeps," he said gravely. "I've heard her weeping."

"If," Joyce said, hard, "she was on fire, I wouldn't pee on her to put her out."

But they all, in their idle afternoons, liked him about their rooms. He fetched them newspapers and cigarettes; he was a nice boy and, yawning in their dressing gowns and irremediably nocturnal, they discarded their professionalism with him. Their calm acceptance of the world as a disintegration eased him; his instinct had been right in seeking a brothel to live in.

Yet he saw the house, for all its matter-of-fact squalor, as existing in a world still spectral to him. Still he lived behind thick glass, unreleased and peering out in ~~darkness~~ waiting. Only his old army nightmare was gone—the recurrent dream in which he lay sealed tight into a leaden pipe under a pavement where he could hear, ever passing and returning, the heeltaps of compassionate ~~but~~ ~~unattractive~~ women. But the tanklike underwater quiet of the observation ward in the asylum was still with him always. And he could not break through, smash the glass. Not yet.

It was Kathleen who took quite a fancy to him. They had disconnected conversations in her room: she ~~assured~~ him amicably as a virginal presence that did not ~~want~~ to touch her. She was plump as a rose, and a ~~sparkle~~ of natural color was still strewn over her, the ~~youngest girl~~ in the house. She promised to try to find ~~him~~ a job at

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trumpeter in one of the clubs; he could earn a pound a night at this if he became proficient.

"But I don't want to earn a lot of money," he said earnestly. "It's time we learned how to do without money. We must learn to live and create like God."

"I've met all types of men," she said vaguely, tucking her weary legs under her on the bed. "And I hate them all. I tell you I've got to have six double gins before I can bring one home. That costs them a quid or two extra; I make the sods spend."

He said dreamily, "When I took poison I felt I was making a creative act, if it was only that I was going out to search." He could still rest in the shade of that release; the mysteriousness of that blue underworld fume was still there, giving him a promise of fulfilment. "I saw huge shapes . . . they were like huge flowers, dark and heavy blood-colored flowers. They looked at me, they moved, they listened, their roots began to twine into me, I could feel them in my bowels. . . . But I couldn't rise, I was lying in the mud. I couldn't breathe in the new way. I tried to struggle up . . . through. But I fell back, and everything disappeared——"

"Don't you go trying to commit suicide in this house," she said. "Mrs. Walton would never forgive you. That Irish tyke's doing enough to advertise us already. . . . You're not queer, are you?" she asked, desultory. "I like queer men, they don't turn me sick. . . . Always at one," she ruminated of the others.

She attracted him more than the other four, but, to content his instinct completely, he wished her more sordid, lewd, and foul-tongued, more disintegrated. The ghostly lineaments of a trembling young girl remained in her. They conversed to each other across a distance. But she was the only one of the women who still appeared to observe things beyond this private world of the brothel. He sometime tried to talk to her about God.

The taxicabs began to purr up to the front door an time after midnight. Sometimes he got out of his bed in the basement, mounted the staircase in trousers and socks, and stood poised in the dark as if waiting for a shattering revelation from behind the closed doors. There was th

useless bomber pilot who broke down and shouted weeping to Joyce that his nerve was gone—"Well," Joyce had said in her ruthless way, "you can stay if you like, but I'm keeping my present all the same, mind!" That pleased him, as he carefully listened; it belonged to the chaos, the burnt-out world reduced to charcoal. He laughed softly to himself. What if he blew his trumpet on this phantasmagoric staircase? Blew it over the fallen night, waken these dead, surprise them with a new anarchial fanfare?

One week when the elder tree and the peonies were in blossom in the once-cultivated back garden, Irish Lil declared she had a birthday. She opened her room on the Monday night—always an off-night—to whoever wished to come in. Ranks of beer flagons stood on the sideboard, and Harry, her Guards sergeant regular, roared and strutted before them in his battle dress like David before the Ark. Three refugees from the basement ventured in; Joyce forgot her vendetta, but refused to dress or make up; Pamela sat repairing a stocking. When he arrived from the theatre the beer was freely flowing. Irish Lil, in a magenta sateen gown, was wearing long, ornate earrings in a vain attempt to look seductive. Kathleen, on this off-night occasion, gazed at him with a kind of sisterly pensiveness.

"Heard that one about Turnham Green——?" bawled Harry, and took off his khaki blouse before telling it, owing to the heat.

He was a great tree of flesh. His roots were tenacious in the earth. The juice in his full lips was the blood of a king bull; the seeds of war flourished in the field of his muscular belly. For a battle was a dinner, a bomb a dog bark, a bayonet a cat scratch, and in the palm of his great blue paw statesmen curled secure. He was the salt of the earth. The limericks flying off his lips became more obscene.

But they fell flat. The prostitutes were bored with obscenity, the refugees did not understand English humor. Joyce yawned markedly.

"Hell, what's this?" Harry panted a bit—"The funeral of the duchess? . . . Reminds me. Heard that one about Her Grace and the fishmonger?"

"Fetch your trumpet, will you?" asked Irish Lil, feeling a little music was necessary.

"What!" shouted Harry, delighted. "He's got a trumpet? I been in the band in my time. A kick or two from a trumpet's jest what's needed."

He snatched the beautifully shining instrument and set it to his great curled lips. The bull neck swelled, the huge face glowed red. And without mistake, unfalteringly, from harmonious lungs, he played the "Londonderry Air." A man blowing a trumpet successfully is a rousing spectacle. The blast is an announcement of the lifted sun. Harry stood on a mountain peak, monarch of all he surveyed.

Kathleen came in, hesitating, and sat beside him on the camp bed. "What's the matter?" she asked. He had flung away with the trumpet as soon as Harry had laid it down. He sat concentratedly polishing it with a bit of chiffon scarf she had once given him, especially the mouthpiece. "Has he spoiled it then?" she murmured.

He did not answer. But his fingers were trembling. She said wearily, "He's started reciting 'Eskimo Nell' now."

"I wish I could play like him," he whispered.

"You do make an awful noise," she said in a compassionate way. "You haven't got the knack yet, with all your practicing . . . I wonder," she brooded after a while, "if it's worth going down West. But they're so choosy on a Monday night."

"Don't go." He laid down the trumpet as if abandoning it forever. "Don't go."

She seemed not to be listening, her preoccupied eyes gazing out of the window. The oblong of garden was filled with the smoky red after-fume of sunset. Their low voices drifted into silences. Two pigeons gurgled in the elder tree; a cat rubbed against the windowpane and became intent on the pigeons. Kathleen's mouth was pursed up thoughtfully. He was conscious of the secret carnation glow of her thighs. Her thick hair smelled of obliterating night.

"I won't ever play my trumpet." His voice stumbled. "I have no faith, no belief, and I can't accept the world. . . . I can't feel it."

"Christ, there's enough to feel," she protested. "This bloody war, and the bombs——"

"In the army they taught us to get used to the smell of blood. It smells of hate. . . . And to turn the bayonet deep in the guts. . . . There were nice chaps in our battalion who had letters and parcels from home . . . from loving mothers and girls . . . and they didn't mind the blood and the bayonets; they had had their fill of love and faith, I suppose. But I was hungry all the time, I wanted to be fed, and I wanted to create, and I wanted children. . . . I am incomplete," he whispered—"I didn't have the right to kill."

"But you tried to kill yourself," she pointed out, though vaguely, as if her attention was elsewhere.

"My body," he said—"that *they* owned."

"Well, what can you *do*?" she asked, after another silence. "You ought to take up some study, a boy with your brains. . . . It's a shame," she cried, with a sudden burst of the scandalized shrillness of her kind, "the army takes 'em, breaks 'em, and chuck's 'em out when they've got no further use for 'em. . . . What *can* you do?"

"There's crime," he said.

"It don't pay," she said at once.

"I believe," he said, "there'll be big waves of crime after the war. You can't have so much killing, so much teaching to destroy, and then stop it suddenly. . . . The old kinds of crime, and new crimes against the holiness in the heart. There'll be fear, and shame, and guilt, guilt. People will be mad. There's no such thing as victory in war. There's only misery, chaos and suffering for everybody, and then the payment. . . . There's only one victory—over the evil in the heart. And that's a rare miracle." His voice faltered in defeat. "I've been trying to make the attempt. But the air I breathe is full of poison."

She let him talk, pretending to listen. Clients sometimes talked to her oddly and, if there was time, it was professional tact to allow them their airings.

"Harry, up there," he went on dejectedly, "carries the world on his shoulders. But he'll rob his mother and starve his wife and pick his neighbor's pocket." He took up the trumpet off the bed, turned it over regretfully, and let it

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drop back. "I can't even play my trumpet like him," he reiterated obsessively. "Would I make a better criminal?"

"Now, look here," she said, her attention arrested, "don't you go starting down *that* street! Boys like you alone in London can soon go to the bad. I've seen some of it. It won't pay, I'm telling you."

"But crime as a protest," he said earnestly. "As a relief. And don't you see there's nothing but crime now, as the heart of things?"

Professionally comforting, she laid her hand on his, which began to tremble again. Yet his small crystal eyes remained impervious, with their single-purposed rigidity. She stroked his hand. "Don't tremble, don't tremble. . . . Do you ever cry?" she asked, gazing into his face in the last light.

He shook his head. "I can't." But something was flickering into his eyes. He had leaned towards her slowly.

"If you could," she said, but still with a half-vague inattentiveness—"I'm sure you ought to break down. You're too shut in on yourself."

He breathed her odor of flesh. It seemed to him like the scent of milky flowers living and benign, scattered in a pure air. As if it would escape him, he began to breathe it hungrily. His hands had stopped trembling. But the rigid calm of his appearance, had she noticed it in the dusky light, was more disquieting.

"There!" she said, still a little crouched away from him; "you see, a little personal talk is good for you. You're too lonely, that's what it is."

"Will you let me——"

"What?" she asked, more alert. The light was finishing; her face was dim.

"Put my mouth to your breast?"

"No," she said at once. She shook her head. "It wouldn't be any use, anyhow."

But, now that the words were out, he fell on her in anguish. "Stay with me! Don't go away. Sleep with me tonight." He pressed his face into her, shuddering, and weeping at last. "Stay!"

She heaved herself free, jumping off the bed with a squirm, like anger. "Didn't I tell you that I hated men!"

She raised her voice, very offended. "I could spit on them all—and you, too, now." She opened the door. "But I will say this"—her voice relented a degree—"I wouldn't sleep with you if you offered me ten pounds! I know what I am, and I don't want any of your fancy stuff." She flounced out with scandalized decision.

He rolled over and over on the bed. Shuddering, he pressed his face into the pillow. When the paroxysm had passed he half rose and sat looking out of the window. In his movement the trumpet crashed to the floor, but he did not pick it up. He sat gazing out into the still world as if he would never penetrate it again. He saw grey dead light falling over smashed cities, over broken precipices and jagged torn chasms of the world. Acrid smoke from abandoned ruins mingled with the smell of blood. He saw himself the inhabitant of a wilderness where withered bushes could lift in guidance no more. There were no more voices and all the paps of earth were dry.

## THE DANGER OF BEING TOO INNOCENT

*by Honoré de Balzac*

*Balzac knew something about everything, as his torrent of novels shows; but his lovers sometimes did not. Here two of them seek the answers to questions for which, today, they would both doubtless go under analysis.*

THE lord of Moncontour was a brave soldier of Tours, who, in honour of the battle gained by the Duke of Anjou, afterwards our right glorious king, caused to be built at Vouvray the castle thus named, for he had borne himself most bravely in that affair, where he overcame the greatest of heretics, and from that was authorized to take the name. Now this said captain had two sons, good Catholics, of whom the eldest was in favour at court. After the peace, which was concluded before the stratagem arranged for St. Bartholomew's day, the good man returned to his manor, which was not ornamented as it is at the present day. There he received the sad announcement of the death of his son, slain in a duel by the lord of Villequier. The poor father was the more cut up at this, as he had arranged a capital marriage for this said son with a young lady of the male branch of Amboise. Now, by this death most piteously inopportune, vanished all the future and advan-

tages of his family, of which he wished to make a great and noble house. With this idea, he had put his other son in a monastery, under the guidance and government of a man renowned for his holiness, who brought him up in a Christian manner, according to the desire of his father, who wished from high ambition to make of him a cardinal of renown. For this the good abbot kept the young man in a private house, had him to sleep by his side in his cell, allowed no evil weeds to grow in his mind, brought him up in purity of soul and true contrition, as all priests should be. This said clerk, when turned nineteen years, knew no other love than the love of God, no other nature than that of the angels who have not our carnal properties, in order that they may live in purity, seeing that otherwise they would make good use of them. The which the King on High, who wished to have His pages always proper, was afraid of. He has done well, because his good little people cannot drink in dram shops or riot in brothels as ours do. He is divinely served; but then, remember, He is Lord of all. Now in this plight the lord of Moncontour determined to withdraw his second son from the cloister, and invest him with the purple of the soldier and the courtier, in the place of the ecclesiastical purple; and determined to give him in marriage to the maiden, affianced to the dead man, which was wisely determined because wrapped around with continence and sobriety in all ways as was the little monk, the bride would be as well used and happier than she would have been with the elder, already well hauled over, upset, and spoilt by the ladies of the court. The beforked, unfrocked, and very sheepish in his ways, followed the sacred wishes of his father, and consented to the said marriage without knowing what a wife, and—what is more curious—what a girl was. By chance, his journey having been hindered by the troubles and marches of conflicting parties, this innocent—more innocent than it is lawful for a man to be innocent—only came to the castle of Moncontour the evening before the wedding, which was performed with dispensations bought in the archbishopric of Tours. It is necessary here to describe the bride. Her mother, long time a widow, lived in the house of M. de Braguelongne, civil lieutenant of the Chatelet de Paris, whose wife lived with the lord of

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Lignières, to the great scandal of the period. But every one then had so many joists in his own eye that he had no right to notice the rafters in the eyes of others. Now, in all families people go to perdition, without noticing their neighbours, some at an amble, others at a gentle trot, many at a gallop, and a small number walking, seeing that the road is all down hill. Thus in these times the devil had many a good orgie in all things, since that misconduct was fashionable. The poor old lady Virtue had retired trembling, no one knew whither, but now here, now there, lived miserably in company with honest women.

In the most noble house of Amboise there still lived the dowager of Chaumont, an old woman of well-proved virtue, in whom had retired all the religion and good conduct of this fine family. The said lady had taken to her bosom, from the age of ten years, the little maiden who is concerned in this adventure, and who never caused Madame Amboise the least anxiety, but left her free in her movements, and she came to see her daughter once a year, when the court passed that way. In spite of this high maternal reserve, Madame Amboise was invited to her daughter's wedding, and also the lord of Braguelongne, by the good old soldier, who knew his people. But the dear dowager came not to Moncontour, because she could not obtain leave from her sciatica, her cold, nor the state of her legs, which gambolled no longer. Over this the good woman cried copiously. It hurt her much to let go into the dangers of the court and of life this gentle maiden, as pretty as it was possible for a pretty girl to be, but she was obliged to give her her wings. But it was not without promising her many masses and orisons every evening for her happiness. And comforted a little, the good old lady began to think that the staff of her old age was passing into the hands of a quasi-saint, brought up to do good by the above-mentioned abbot, with whom she was acquainted, the which had aided considerably in the prompt exchange of spouses. At length, embracing her with tears, the virtuous dowager made those last recommendations to her that ladies make to young brides, as that she ought to be respectful to his mother, and obey her husband in everything.

Then the maid arrived with a great noise, conducted by

servants, chamberlains, grooms, gentlemen, and people of the house of Chaumont, so that you would have imagined her suite to be that of a cardinal legate. So arrived the two spouses the evening before their marriage. Then, the feasting over, they were married with great pomp on the Lord's Day, a mass being said at the castle by the abbot of Blandy who was a great friend of the lord of Moncontour; in short the feasting, the dancing, and the festivities of all sorts lasted till the morning. But on the stroke of midnight the bridesmaids went to put the bride to bed, according to the custom of Touraine; and during this time they kept quarelling with the innocent husband, to prevent him from saving this innocent wife, who sided with them from ignorance. However, the good lord of Moncontour interrupted the jokers and the wits, because it was necessary that his son should occupy himself in well-doing. Then went the innocent into the chamber of his wife, whom he thought more beautiful than the Virgin Marys painted in Brabant, Flanders, and other pictures, at whose feet he had said his ~~prayers~~. But you may be sure he felt very much embarrassed in having so soon become a husband, because he knew nothing of his business, and saw that certain items had to be gone through concerning which, from great and sudden trouble he had not time to question even his father, who had ~~said~~ sharply to him—

"You know what you have to do; be ~~written~~ ~~written~~"

Then he saw the gentle girl who was comfortably tucked up in the bedclothes, head buried under, but hazarding a glance at the point of a halberd, and saying to herself,

"I must obey him."

"Have you said your ~~prayer~~?"

Then the young people began to do all the housekeeping by themselves.

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of place. But unfortunately the devil heard, and at once replied to their requests. God being occupied at that time with the new and abominable reformed religion.

"What did they tell you to do?" said the husband.

"To love you," said she, in perfect innocence.

"That has not been told to me; but I love you, I am ashamed to say, better than I love God."

This speech did not at all alarm the bride.

"I should like," said the husband, "to repose myself in your bed, if it will not disturb you."

"I will make room for you willingly, because I am to submit myself to you."

"Well," said he, "don't look at me then. I'm going to take my clothes off, and come."

At this virtuous speech, the young damsel turned herself towards the wall in great expectation, seeing that it was for the first time that she was about to find herself separated from a man by the confines of a shirt only. Then came the innocent, gliding into the bed, and thus they found themselves, so to speak, united, but far from you can imagine what. Did you ever see a monkey brought from across the seas, who for the first time is given a nut to crack? This ape, knowing by high apish imagination how delicious is the food hidden under the shell, sniffs and twists himself about in a thousand apish ways, saying I know not what between his chattering jaws. Ah! with what affection he studies it, with what study he examines it, in what examination he holds it, then throws it, rolls and tosses it about with passion, and often, when it is an ape of low extraction and intelligence, leaves the nut. As much did the poor innocent who, towards the dawn, was obliged to confess to his dear wife that, not knowing how to perform his office, or what that office was, or where to obtain the said office, it would be necessary for him to inquire concerning it, to have help and aid.

"Yes," said she, "since, unhappily, I cannot instruct you."

In fact, in spite of their efforts, essays of all kinds—in spite of a thousand things which the innocents invent, and which the wise in matters of love know nothing about—the pair dropped off to sleep, wretched at having been

unable to discover the secret of marriage. But they wisely agreed to say that they had done so. When the wife got up, still a maiden, seeing that she had not been crowned, she boasted of her night, and said she had the king of husbands, and went on with her chattering and repartees as briskly as those who know nothing of these things. Then every one found the maiden a little too sharp, since for a two-edged joke a lady of Roche-Corbon having incited a young maiden, de la Bourdaisière, who knew nothing of such things, to ask the bride—

"How many loaves did your husband put in the oven?"  
"Twenty-four," she replied.

Now, as the bridegroom was roaming sadly about, thereby distressing his wife, who followed him with her eyes, hoping to see his state of innocence come to an end, the ladies believed that the joy of that night had cost him dear, and that the said bride was already regretting having so quickly ruined him. And at breakfast came the bad jokes, which at that time were relished as excellent. One said that the bride had an open expression; another, that there had been some good strokes of business that night in the castle; this one, that the oven had been burned; that one that the two families had lost something that night that they would never find again. And a thousand other jokes, stupidities and double meanings that, unfortunately, the husband did not understand. But on account of the great affluence of the relations, neighbours, and others, no one had been to bed; all had danced, rollicked, and frolicked, as is the custom at noble weddings.

At this was quite contented my said Sieur de Brague-longne, upon whom my lady of Amboise, excited by the thought of the good things which were happening to her daughter, cast the glances of a falcon in matters of gallant assignation. The poor lieutenant civil, learned in bailiffs' men and sergeants, and who nabbed all the pickpockets and scamps of Paris, pretended not to see his good fortune, although his good lady required him to. You may be sure this great lady's love weighed heavily upon him, so he only kept to her from a spirit of justice, because it was not seeming in a lieutenant criminal to change his mistresses as often as a man at court, because he had under his charge

morals, the police, and religion. This notwithstanding his rebellion must come to an end. On the day after the wedding a great number of the guests departed; then Madame d'Amboise and Monsieur de Braguelongne could go to bed, their guests having decamped. Sitting down to supper, the lieutenant received a half-verbal summons to which it was not becoming, as in legal matters, to oppose any reasons for delay.

During supper the said lady d'Amboise made more than a hundred little signs in order to draw the good Braguelongne from the room where he was with the bride, but out came instead of the lieutenant the husband, to walk about in company with the mother of his sweet wife. Now, in the mind of this innocent there had sprung up like a mushroom an expedient—namely, to interrogate this good lady, whom he considered discreet, for remembering the religious precepts of his abbot, who had told him to inquire concerning all things of old people expert in the ways of life, he thought of confiding his case to my said lady d'Amboise. But he made first awkwardly and shyly certain twists and turns, finding no terms in which to unfold his case. And the lady was also perfectly silent, since she was outrageously struck with the blindness, deafness, and voluntary paralysis of the lord of Braguelongne; and said to herself, walking by the side of this delicate morsel, a young innocent of whom she did not think, little imagining that this cap so well provided with young bacon could think of old, "This Ho, Ho, with a beard of flies' legs, a flimsy, old, grey, ruined, shaggy beard—a beard without comprehension, beard without shame, without any feminine respect—beard which pretends neither to feel nor to hear nor to see, a pared away beard, a beaten down, disordered, gutted beard. May the Italian sickness deliver me from this vile joker with a squashed nose, fiery nose, frozen nose, nose without religion, nose dry as a lute table, pale nose, nose without a soul, nose which is nothing but a shadow; nose which sees not, nose wrinkled like the leaf of the vine; nose that I hate, old nose, nose full of mud—dead nose. Where have my eyes been to attach myself to this truffle nose, to this old hulk that no longer knows his way? I give my share to the devil of this old juiceless beard, of this old grey beard, of

this monkey face, of these old tatters, of this old rag of a man, of this—I know not what; and I'll take a young husband who'll marry me properly, and . . . and often—every day—and well——”

In this wise train of thought was she when the innocent began his anthem to this woman, so warmly excited, who at the first paraphrase took fire in her understanding, like a piece of old touchwood from the carbine of a soldier; and finding it wise to try her son-in-law, said to herself, “A young beard, sweet scented! ah! pretty new nose—~~fresh~~ beard—innocent nose—virgin beard—nose full of joy—beard of springtime, small key of love!”

She kept on talking the round of the garden, which was long, and then arranged with the Innocent that, right away, he should sally forth from his room and get into here where she engaged to render him more learned than even was his father. And the husband was well content, and thanked Madame d'Amboise, begging her to say nothing of this arrangement.

of the commerce. Now, the lord of Braguelongne, ashamed of being lost in sad contemplation of his evening's work, and of saying nothing to his gay companion, put this summary interrogation to the fair bride—"If she was not happy with so good a young husband——"

"He is very good," she said.

"Too good, perhaps," said the lieutenant, smiling.

To be brief, matters were so well arranged between them that the lord of Braguelongne engaged to spare no pains to enlighten the understanding of Madame d'Amboise's daughter-in-law, who promised to come and study her lesson in his room. The said lady d'Amboise pretended after supper to play terrible music in a high key to Monsieur de Braguelongne, saying that he had no gratitude for the blessings she had brought him—her position, her wealth, her fidelity, etc. In fact, she talked for half an hour without having exhausted a quarter of her ire. From this a hundred knives were drawn between them, but they kept the sheaths. Meanwhile the spouses in bed were arranging to themselves how to get away, in order to please each other. Then the innocent began to say he felt quite giddy, he knew not from what, and wanted to go into the open air. And his maiden wife told him to take a stroll in the moonlight. And then the good fellow began to pity his wife in being left alone a moment. At her desire, both of them at different times left their conjugal couch and came to their preceptors, both very impatient, as you can well believe; and good instruction was given to them. How? I cannot say, because every one has his own method and practice, and of all sciences this is the most variable in principle. You may be sure that never did scholars receive more gaily the precepts of any language, grammar, or lessons whatsoever. And the two spouses returned to their nest, delighted at being able to communicate to each other the discoveries of their scientific peregrinations.

"Ah, my dear," said the bride, "you already know more than my master."

From these curious tests came their domestic joy and perfect fidelity; because immediately after their entry into the married state they found out how much better each of them was adapted for love than any one else, their masters

included. Thus for the remainder of their days they kept to the legitimate substance of their own persons; and the lord of Moncontour said in his old age to his friends, "Do like me, be cuckolds in the blade, and not in the sheaf."

Which is the true morality of the conjugal condition.

THE END